

The Biographical Method

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Week 6

Bible Study Methods

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Introduction

The Bible is the story of God's relationship to man. Almost every story in the Bible tells of an encounter a man or woman had with God. The Bible tells the stories of men and women and their relationship with God. When we study these people, we can learn how to live in relationship with God too. We gain great insight into our own relationship with God by looking at both the positive attributes and negative aspects in the lives of the people of the Bible. We can learn what to do by observing their successes and avoid making similar mistakes by investigating their tremendous failures.

Definition

With this method you select a biblical person and research the Scripture to study his life and character. You try to become acquainted with that person's inner life and discover what made his a spiritual success or failure. You try to see the person as God sees the person.

Application comes when you examine your own life in light of the study and ask God to help you make positive character changes in your weak areas. This results in Christian growth and maturity.

Why this method?

1. People are important to God. We are made in his image and likeness and the Bible is a record of his dealings with men and women.
2. God revealed himself both to people and through people. To get to know God, you need to get to know the people of God.
3. Much of the OT is in narrative form, describing the lives of many people. These stories are ILLUSTRATIVE in nature. They teach us about God, through an illustration

Romans 15:4

I Corinthians 10:11

The NT is a book of Instruction, the OT is a book of Illustrations. NT truths are illustrated in the OT. One of the best way to study the OT is to study its people.

4. As you study these people, you attempt to see them through the eyes of God. You try to put his perspective on their lives. Since we get the whole story (we are outside of time as it relates to the story) so we see the whole path. It helps us to see the world like God does.

Tools you will Need

- Study Bible
- Exhaustive Concordance
- Topical Bible
- Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia

Tips

- Start with a person on whom you can do a simple study. Begin with one about whom there is a small number of references.
- The secret of good biographical study is to live with that person during the study. Walk in his or her sandals. Try to get in their minds and see how they think, feel and respond to circumstances. BECOME that person while you are studying them.

Like a good actor studies a character, you will do the same thing. You will spend a lot of time with the person, reading and rereading all the Bible References about them.

- Be careful not to confuse different people with the same name. The context will usually help you determine if you are looking at the right guy.
- Be careful to find various names that may apply. Some names were changed or translated in different languages. Peter = Simon, Simeon, and Cephas.
- Stay away from books written about biblical people until after you have exhausted every Biblical reference. Don't let a commentary rob you of the joy of personal discovery.

The Form

Select the person you want to study

- Find a person who has a weakness that you have
- Find somebody who has a strength you would like to develop

Make a list of ALL the references about that person

- Starting with Concordance, find all the scriptures you can on that person

(VIDEO ON "HOW TO USE/CHOOSE CONCORDANCE" HERE)

- You may need to look up references to the historical background of his life (i.e., if studying Ester, you need to study the Persian Empire)
- ***Use your concordance and Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia***

Write down first impression (First Reading)

- Read through the scripture references and make some notes.
 - Write out your first impressions.

- Note any observations
 - Record any important information
- List any problems, questions or difficulties you wonder about as you read these references.

Make a Chronological Outline (Second Reading)

- Make a timeline.
- This helps you gain a good perspective on his life and see how different events relate to one another.
- Try to read all references in one sitting so that you get a good feel for the person's life.
- Look for any natural major divisions in his life.
- Look for any progressions and changes of attitude in that person's life
- **Use your chronological Bible**

Get some insight into that person (Third Reading)

- Go back over your references again and look for possible answers to the questions suggested in the handout.

Identify Some Character Qualities (Fourth Reading)

- As you review your references use the suggested list of positive and negative characteristics handout as a checklist
- Write out each quality (good and bad) that shows up in a person's life.
- Give verse references that show each characteristic you observed.

Show how other Bible truths are illustrated in the Person's life (Fifth Reading)

- Examine the person's life and see how it illustrates other truths found in scripture
- Example: Does his life show the principle that "you will reap what you sow"
- Find Cross references that illustrates what the Bible says about some of the characteristics you found in this person's life.
- **Use your study bible and topical bible.**

Summarize the Main Lesson(s)

- In a few sentences write out what you think the main lesson that is taught of illustrated by this person's life.
- Is there any one word that could describe that life?
- What was his or her outstanding characteristic

Write out a Personal Application

- Did I see anything of myself in this person's life?
- Did he show some of my weaknesses?
- Did he reveal to me some of my strengths?

- What impressed me the most about this person's life?
- Where do I fall short in this area?
- What do I intend to do about it?

Make your Study Transferable

- Condense what you have learned into a simple outline that will help you remember it and enable you to share your conclusions with others.
- Divide the info into natural sequences of time and/or events and lessons learned.
- Think of some easily remember titles for each section
- Make up rhymes, alliterations, other memory devices.

LETS DO AN EXAMPLE