

Biographical Study Method

Dr. Chuck Swindoll wrote this: “The Bible does not yield it’s treasures to the lazy soul.” The more we develop skills for studying God’s Word, the more profound this quote becomes.

Many people only read God’s Word like an encyclopedia: Short, random passages full of truth. But there is much more insight when we treat the Word of God as vast treasure below the surface that needs to be mined. The priceless nuggets are most often found deep down after a lot of consistent work.

Devotional length reading on a daily basis is wonderful. In fact, we should be doing that every day. But setting aside a block of time every few days or once a week to study God’s Word brings a whole new level of understanding and intimacy with God.

One such method is the Biographical Study Method.

You will need a Bible (A good Study Bible is preferred.)

A concordance (This is just an alphabetical list of the words in the Bible) (An exhaustive concordance is preferred.)

A Subject index would be very helpful.

Great Resource: www.biblestudytools.com (This free site includes the full exhaustive concordance and just about any translation you would like.)

1. Choose a person from the Bible for your study. (A list of names is included.)

2. List all references concerning that person.

An exhaustive concordance will give these to you, but don’t forget to look for ambiguous references or nicknames, as well.

Example: John the apostle is listed as John, the son of Zebedee, and the disciple whom Jesus loved.

3. Read all the references concerning the person. (This may take two minutes or 2 hours.)

Shamgar will take two minutes (Look him up 😊). Joseph (Jacob’s son) might take an hour.

4. Summarize your first impression of this person.

5. Read the passages again and look for insights about the person’s character and personality.

Use the attached general questions to guide you.

6. How does this person relate to Jesus?

Foreshadow of Christ, comparison to Christ, prophet of Christ, follower of Christ, anti-Christ
Moses (Foreshadow), Elijah (comparison), Malachi (Prophet), Peter, Jezebel (Against Christ)

7. **List the Bible truths that are illustrated in this person's life.**
8. **What questions do you have about this person?**
9. **How can you apply practical truth from this person's life to your life?**

General Questions for a Biographical Study

Reputation

1. Who wrote what we know about this person?
2. What did people say about him/her?
3. What did his enemies say about him/her?
4. What did his/her family (wife/husband, children, brothers, sisters, parents) say about him/her?
5. What did God say about him/her?
6. Why do you think God allowed this person to be mentioned in the Bible?

Tests of Character

1. What were his/her aims and motives?
2. What was he/she like in his home?
3. How did he/she respond to failure? Did he/she get discouraged easily?
4. How did he/she respond to adversity? Did he/she handle criticism well?
5. How did he/she respond to success? Did he/she get proud when praised?
6. How did he/she respond to the trivial and mundane things in life? Was he/she faithful in the little things?
7. How quickly did he/she praise God for the good/bad things that happened to him/her?
8. How quickly did he/she obey God when told to do something?

Background

1. What can you discover about his/her family and ancestry?
2. What does his/her name mean? Why was he/she given that name? Has it ever changed?
3. What was his/her home life like? How was he/she raised? Where was he/she raised?
4. What were the characteristics of his/her parents? Did they influence him/her?
5. Was there anything special about his/her birth?
6. Where did he/she live? What was his/her everyday life like?
7. Was he/she exposed to other cultures? Did they affect him/her in any way?
8. What was the condition of his/her country -- politically and spiritually --during his/her lifetime?
9. What kind of training did he/she have? Did he/she have any schooling?
10. What was his/her occupation?
11. How long did he/she live? Where did he/she die? How did he/she die?

Significant Events

1. Was there any great crisis in his/her life? How did he/she handle it?
2. What are the great accomplishments for which he/she is remembered?
3. Did he/she experience a divine 'call?' How did he/she respond to it?
4. What crucial decisions did he/she have to make? How did they affect him/her? Others?
5. Did any recurring problem keep coming up in his/her life?
6. Where did he/she succeed? Where did he/she fail? Why?
7. How did the environment and circumstances affect him/her?
8. What part did he/she play in the history of God's plan?
9. Did he/she believe in the sovereignty of God (God's control over all events)?

Relationships

1. How did he/she get along with other people? Was he/she a loner? Was he/she a team person?
2. How did he/she treat other people? Did he/she use them to serve them?
3. What was his/her wife/husband like? How did she/he influence him/her/her?
4. What were his/her children like? How did they influence him/her?
5. Who were his/her close companions? What were they like? How did they influence him/her?

6. Who were his/her enemies? What were they like? How did they influence him/her?
7. What influence did he/she have on others? On his nation? On other nations?
8. Did he/she take care of his family? How did his/her children turn out?
9. Did his/her friends and family help or hinder him/her in serving the Lord?
10. Did he/she train anyone to take his place? Did he/she leave a "Timothy" (disciple) behind?

Personality

1. What were the outstanding strengths in his/her character? What traits did he/she have?
2. Did his/her life show any development of character as time passed? Was there growth and progression there?
3. What were his/her particular faults and weaknesses?
4. What were his/her particular sins? What steps led to those sins?
5. In what area was his/her greatest battle: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, or pride of life, ...etc.?
6. What were the results of his/her sins and weaknesses?
7. Did he/she ever get the victory over his particular sins and weaknesses?
8. What qualities made him/her a success or failure?

Prominent Women

Abigail	Abishag	Anna	Bathsheba	Deborah
Delilah	Dinah	Dorcas	Elizabeth	Esther
Eunice	Eve	Hagar	Hannah	Jezebel
Jochabed	Leah	Lydia	Martha	Mary – Jesus' mother
Mary Magdalene	Mary of Bethany	Michal	Miriam	Naaman's maid
Naomi	Priscilla	Rachel	Rahab	Rebecca
Ruth	Sapphira	Sarah	the Shunammite	Vashti
Zipporah				

Prominent Men

Abraham	Daniel	David	Elijah	Elisha
Ezekiel	Ezra	Isaiah	Isaac	Jacob

Jeremiah	Jesus	John(apostle)	Joseph (OT)	Joshua
Moses	Nehemiah	Paul	Peter	Pharaoh
Samson	Samuel	Saul (OT)	Solomon	

Secondary list of men

Aaron	Abel	Abimelech	Abner	Absalom
Achan	Adam	Ahab	Ahithophel	Amos
Ananias	Andrew	Apollos	Apostles – any	Aquila
Asa	Balaam	Barnabas	Barzillai	Caiaphas
Caleb	Eli	Esau	Gehazi	Gideon
Habakkuk	Haggai	Haman	Herod	Hezekiah
Hosea	Jabez	James	Jehoshaphat	Jeroboam
Joab	Job	John the Baptist		Jonah
Jonathan	Judas Iscariot	Judges – any	Kings – any	Laban
Lot	Luke	Mark	Matthew	Melchizedek
Mephibosheth	Mordecai	Naaman	Nathan	Noah
Philemon	Philip	Pontius Pilate	Prophets – any	Rehoboam