

Method 5 - The Biographical Method of Bible Study (P. Rhebergen)

5.1 - Tools

- 5.1.1 - Bible
- 5.1.2 - Exhaustive and / or biographical concordance
- 5.1.3 - Topical Bible
- 5.1.4 - Bible dictionary or encyclopedia

5.2 - Hints

- 5.2.1 - Remember that the person will often be referred to by means other than his / her proper name in many passages.

5.3 - Steps

- Step 1 - Choose an individual from the Bible for your study. See the list below for a selection of persons from the Bible.
- Step 2 - List all references concerning that person. A concordance will help if the person is referred to in the Bible by their proper name, but you may also wish to look for ambiguous references to the person (ie: Pharaoh's wife or the son of Zebedee).
- Step 3 - Note your first impression of the person after your first reading of the passages.
- Step 4 - Make a chronological outline of the person's life after your second reading.
- Step 5 - Obtain some insights into the person after your third reading.
- Step 6 - Identify some character qualities after your fourth reading.
- Step 7 - Show how some other Bible truths are illustrated in this person's life.
- Step 8 - Summarize the main lesson(s) you have learned.
- Step 9 - Write out a personal application.
- Step 10 - Make your study transferable.
- Step 11 - Note someone with whom you will share the results of this study and commit yourself to doing this.

A Partial List of Biblical People

The three following lists include some of the major men of the Bible, the minor but important men of the Bible, and the prominent women of the Bible.

Major Men of the Bible

1. Abraham	9. Isaac	17. Nehemiah
2. Daniel	10. Jacob	18. Paul
3. David	11. Jeremiah	19. Peter
4. Elijah	12. Jesus	20. Pharaoh
5. Elisha	13. John – apostle	21. Samson
6. Ezekiel	14. Joseph – OT	22. Samuel
7. Ezra	15. Joshua	23. Saul – OT
8. Isaiah	16. Moses	24. Solomon

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Minor but Important Men of the Bible

1. Aaron	15. Aquila	29. Herod	43. Kings – any	57. Pontius Pilate
2. Abel	16. Asa	30. Hezekiah	44. Laban	58. Prophets – any
3. Abimelech	17. Balaam	31. Hosea	45. Lot	59. Rehoboam
4. Abner	18. Barnabas	32. Jabez	46. Luke	60. Shamgar
5. Absalom	19. Barzillai	33. James	47. Mark	61. Silas
6. Achan	20. Caiaphas	34. Jehoshaphat	48. Matthew	62. Stephen
7. Adam	21. Caleb	35. Jeroboam	49. Melchizedek	63. Timothy
8. Ahab	22. Eli	36. Joab	50. Mephibosheth	64. Titus
9. Ahithophel	23. Esau	37. Job	51. Mordecai	65. Tychicus
10. Amos	24. Gehazi	38. John the Baptist	52. Naaman	66. Uzziah
11. Ananias	25. Gideon	39. Jonah	53. Nathan	67. Zechariah
12. Andrew	26. Habakkuk	40. Jonathan	54. Noah	68. Zedekiah
13. Apollos	27. Haggai	41. Judas Iscariot	55. Philemon	69. Zephaniah
14. Apostles – any	28. Haman	42. Judges – any	56. Philip	70. Zerubbabel

Prominent Women of the Bible

1. Abigail	11. Eunice	21. Mary Magdalene	31. Rebecca
2. Abishag	12. Eve	22. Mary of Bethany	32. Ruth
3. Anna	13. Hagar	23. Michal	33. Sapphira
4. Bathsheba	14. Hannah	24. Miriam	34. Sarah
5. Deborah	15. Jezebel	25. Naaman's maid	35. The Shunammite
6. Delilah	16. Jochebed	26. Naomi	36. Vashti
7. Dinah	17. Leah	27. Priscilla	37. Zipporah
8. Dorcas	18. Lydia	28. Queen of Sheba	
9. Elizabeth	19. Martha	29. Rachel	
10. Esther	20. Mary – Jesus' mother	30. Rahab	

General Questions for a Biographical Study

Here is a list of seventy questions you can use in constructing a biographical study. You shouldn't try to use every question listed here in a single study. Depending on the depth of your study and the time you have, select the questions you would like to have answered. The questions are categorized into seven major divisions for easier use. As you think of other questions, add them to this list.

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? Was 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 or 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?

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Personality

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

A List of Positive Character Qualities to Find

A Servant	Courteousness	Forgiveness	Modesty	Self-denying
Agreeableness	Creativity	Generosity	Obedience	Self-giving
Balance	Dedication	Gentleness	Observer	Sense of Humor
Boldness	Deference	Good Stewardship	Optimism	Sensitivity
Bravery	Dependability	Gratefulness	Orderliness	Sincerity
Calmness	Determinate	Honesty	Patience	Stableness
Carefulness	Diligence	Humbleness	Peacemaking	Submissiveness
Cautiousness	Discernment	Independence	Perspective	Sympathy
Characterized by the Beatitudes	Discipline	Industry	Positiveness	Thankfulness
Chasteness	Discreetness	Integrity	Pureness	Thriftiness
Cheerfulness	Durableness	Kindness	Quietness	Tolerance
Cleanliness	Earnestness	Lovingness	Resourcefulness	Trustworthiness
Compassionate	Energy	Loyalty	Respectfulness	Uncomplaining
Confidence	Enthusiasm	Man of Faith	Reverence	Uncompromising
Consideration	Fairness	Meekness	Righteousness	Wholeheartedness
Contentedness	Faithfulness	Mercifulness	Sacrifice	Wisdom
Courageousness	Flexibleness	Moderateness	Self-control	Zealousness

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A List of Negative Character Qualities to Find

A Busybody	Coarse	Friend of the World	Jealous	Selfish
A Cop-out	Complaining	Gluttonous	Lazy	Sensual
A Doubter	Compromising	Gossiper	Legalistic	Shallow
A Drunkard	Conceited	Greedy	Libelous	Shortsighted
A Liar	Covetous	Grudging	Loves Men's Praise	Slanderer
A Sluggard	Cowardly	Halfhearted	Lukewarm	Stingy
A Worrier	Crafty / Sly	Harsh	Lusts for Power	Stubborn
Adulterous	Cruel	Headstrong	Malicious	Talkative
Angry Without Cause	Deceitful	Humorless	Manipulative	Tyrannical
Annoying	Dishonest	Hypocritical	Murmurer	Unclean
Apathetic	Disobedient	Idle	Negligent	Undisciplined
Apostate	Disrespectful	Idolatrous	Prejudiced	Unfair
Argumentative	Doctrinally Off	Immodest	Presumptuous	Unfaithful
Arrogant	Dogmatic	Immoral	Procrastinator	Unforgiving
Ashamed of Christ	Double-minded	Impolite	Profane	Ungrateful
Backbiter	Envious	Impulsive	Proud	Unkind
Bigoted	Fearful	Independent Spirit	Rebellious	Unreliable
Bitter	Fears Men	Indifferent	Rejoices in Evil	Unsociable
Blasphemous	Fickle	Inhuman	Reprobate	Vain
Boastful	Flatterer	Insensitive	Rude / Gross	Violent
Callous	Foolish	Insulting	Sarcastic	Wasteful
Careless	Forgetful	Irritating	Scornful	Wavering
	Forgets God		Self-righteous	Worldly
	Fornicator			

Reference:

1. Warren, Richard, with William A. Shell, 12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods, Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1987.

Method 5 - The Biographical Method of Bible Study (Chart)

1. Name of Bible Personality:	
2. Scripture References:	4. Chronology (second reading):
3. First Impressions (first reading):	
5. General Insights (third reading):	6. Character Qualities (fourth reading):
7. Illustrated Bible Truths:	8. Summary of Lessons Learned:
9. Personal Application/Evaluation:	
10. Transferability Concepts:	11. Person to Share this Study with (and why):