

Lesson 4

Methods of Research and Outlining Study

Outline

- I. Character studies
- II. Outlining Study

I. Character Studies

A. Definition

This is where the life or lives of a particular person or people in the Bible are studied. This is probably the most life-oriented and least academic route of study. Its benefit is practical rather than doctrinal and can be a personally meaningful method of studying the Bible.

B. Importance

Generally speaking, we can all identify with the humanity we see in others: the joys and sorrows, successes and failures, strengths and weakness. It is encouraging to study, to learn and draw wisdom and strength from the lives of others. When we look at God's dealings with and words to His people we gain a greater knowledge and understanding of our God and His nature, likes, dislikes, desires and so on.

The New Testament writers often referred to Old Testament characters as examples: those who served God gave an example we should follow, whilst those who didn't, set an example that we should avoid (John 3:14; Acts 7; Romans 4; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Hebrews 3, 7, 11; James 5:11, 17-18; 2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11). When the focus of the character study is to grow in relationship with God, there are many benefits from embarking on this type of study.

C. Method

The method followed in a character study can be flexible depending on the character being studied and the reasons for the study. However, there are a number of basic steps that need to be incorporated into any character study.

There are approximately 2930 individuals referred to in scripture. Some of them are referred to once, others, hundreds of times. It is important to be aware that some characters in the Bible share the same name (there are 30 Zechariah's 15 Jonathans, 8 Judases, 7 Marys and 5 Jameses). Others have various names that apply to the same individual (Peter, Simon, Simeon).

One of the best approaches to a character study is asking and answering certain key questions, including but not limited to:

1. What is the meaning of the person's name? A name will often represent a person's character, experience or ministry.
2. What is their ancestral background? What kind of heritage did they have?
3. What was the political, religious and cultural situation of their day? What was their environment like?
4. What great events took place in their lifetime?
5. Who were their friends and associates? A person is often known by his friends.
6. What character traits did they exhibit – both positive and negative?
7. What were their successes and failures?
8. What influence did they have on those around them?
9. What was their relationship with God like?
10. What lessons can be drawn from their lives? What can I learn and apply to my life?
How is this person's life applicable to our culture and times today?
11. How did God deal with this person? What can I learn about the nature and character of God through this person?

Table 4.1. Some questions to be answered in a character study.

Note: James P. Boyd's Bible Dictionary is strongly recommended as a resource book for definitions of Bible names and other valuable information.

The outline of the layout of a character study is given below in the homework question. It is an illustration of how to practically order the information obtained from a study like this.

Part I - Homework

Do a character study on Enoch in the Old and New Testament using Hebrews 11:5 as a foundation text. Complete steps as outlined below.

The main chapters and sections in the bible which deal with the person's life story need to be read. This gives context and a working knowledge of the character being studied. For Enoch they are: Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 14-15.

1. Using your Bible Dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other references, make notes of the facts given along with scripture references. Include the name of the reference along with the information discovered.
2. Populate a table like the one below with relevant important information and requisite insights gained.

Scripture	Brief verse quote and important details	Insights
Gen 5:21-24		
Heb 11:5		
Jude 14-15		

3. Answer the questions cited in Table 4.1 regarding Enoch.

II. Outlining Study

A. The Importance of Outlining Study

All Bible studies, whatever method is being used (word, character, place, textual, topical, passage or book studies) need to have a logical method of outline and layout. This applies to various types of communication:

- for teaching and/or preaching
- bible studies written for small groups
- other bible studies
- books
- etc.

1. Outlining Assists in the Understanding of Scripture

It helps:

- a. one more readily comprehend the scripture being studied.
- b. one understand the progression of thought that the writer had in mind.

2. Outlining Assists in the Memorization of Scripture

It helps:

- a. with location of passages in the Bible.
- b. one grasps the content as a whole.

3. Outlining Assists in the Presentation of Scripture

It helps:

- a. to present the Scripture message with greater clarity.
- b. the hearers to more readily receive and retain the message.
- c. to make the subject more interesting.

B. Methods of Outlining

There are numerous methods of outlining studies which are appropriate. The following approach is a general one in this area. This can be used whether doing a bible study in one's own devotional time, developing a bible study for a small group, writing a book, or preaching and teaching. It is important that whatever method is utilised, there is consistency throughout.

The key to a successful study lies predominantly in the organisation of the data and information that has been acquired. A multitude of facts in no logical arrangement for presentation loses a lot of significance in the ears of the hearer.

An outline is the simplest means of showing the plan of presentation. It is a means of grouping related facts. It should not be difficult or complex to create, but simply be a means and an aid to serve the student, writer or speaker. Like a builder's blueprint, an outline may be altered, expanded, and adjusted as the need arises.

An effective outline will show:

1. The order of the parts
2. The divisions of the subjects
3. The relationships of the parts.

C. Outline Form

1. Use Roman numerals (I, II, etc.) to indicate major divisions.
2. Use capital letters (A, B, etc.) to indicate the second level of division.
3. Use Arabic numerals (1, 2, etc.) to indicate the third level of division.
4. Use lower-case letters (a, b, etc.) to indicate the fourth level of division.
5. Use Arabic numerals with parentheses to indicate the fifth level of division.
6. Use a period after each number or letter.
7. Indent each subdivision (about five spaces).

D. The Division

There are certain principles undergirding the outline process.

1. Principle #1

- a. Ensure the outline covers the subject completely
- b. The sum of the major headings should represent the entire subject
- c. The sum of the subdivision should represent the entire requisite major heading.

2. Principle #2

- a. Single headings shouldn't appear in the outline
- b. The very fact of dividing implies 2 or more parts. This means, if you have an I, you must have a II; if you have an A, you must have a B; etc.

E. The Arrangement

Once the major divisions on your subject have been allocated, the various parts need to be arranged logically. The nature of the subject will usually suggest an appropriate arrangement.

The most common arrangements are:

1. A Time Pattern

- a. The main points are in chronological division.
- b. The order progresses from a given point in time backward or forward.

2. A Space Pattern

- a. The main points are determined by physical placement.
- b. The order is from east to west, north to south, top to bottom, etc.

3. A Categorical Pattern

- a. The main points are determined by a systematic classification based upon the relationship of the parts to the whole.
- b. The order may follow one of a host of patterns. Some examples include:
 - (1) the simple to the complex
 - (2) the familiar to the unfamiliar
 - (3) the most important or interesting first progressing to the least important.

4. Cause-Effect or Effect Cause Pattern

- a. The main points are built around the cause and the effect
- b. The order depends on whether you are want to determine the causes from the known effect or the effect from the known causes.

5. A Problem-Solution Pattern

- a. The main points are the problem and the solution.
- b. The order is obvious.

6. A Reasons-For or Reasons-Against Pattern

- a. The main points are reasons for supporting or opposing a proposition.
- b. The order may be several of the above.

Part II – Homework

Make a full sentence outline of Matthew chapter 23 using the following framework:

Title of the Chapter: _____

I. _____ vs. 1-12

 A. _____ vs. 1-10

 1. _____ vs. 1-4

 2. _____ vs. 5-10

 a. _____ vs. 5a

 b. _____ vs. 5b

 c. _____ vs. 6a

 d. _____ vs. 6b

 e. _____ vs. 7-10

 (1) _____ vs. 7

 (2) _____ vs. 8-10

 (a) _____ vs. 8

 (b) _____ vs. 9

 (c) _____ vs. 10

 B. _____ vs. 11-12

 1. _____ vs. 12a

 2. _____ vs. 12b

II. _____ vs. 13-36

 A. _____ vs. 13

 1. _____ vs. 13b

 2. _____ vs. 13c

 B. _____ vs. 14

 1. _____ vs. 14b

 2. _____ vs. 14c

 3. _____ vs. 14d

 C. _____ vs. 15

 1. _____ vs. 15b

 2. _____ vs. 15c

 D. _____ vs. 16-22

 1. _____ vs. 16b-17

 2. _____ vs. 18-20

 3. _____ vs. 21-22

 E. _____ vs. 23-24

 1. _____ vs. 23

 2. _____ vs. 24

 F. _____ vs. 25-26

1. _____ vs. 25
2. _____ vs. 26
- G. _____ vs. 27-28
 1. _____ vs. 27
 2. _____ vs. 28
- H. _____ vs. 29-36
 1. _____ vs. 29-30
 - a. _____ vs. 31
 - b. _____ vs. 32
 - c. _____ vs. 33
 - d. _____ vs. 34
 - (1) _____ vs. 34b
 - (2) _____ vs. 34c
 - e. _____ vs. 35
 - (1) _____ vs. 35b
 - (2) _____ vs. 35c
 - f. _____ vs. 36
- III. _____ vs. 37-39
 - A. _____ vs. 37
 - B. _____ vs. 38-39
 1. _____ vs. 38
 2. _____ vs. 39