

# Training Conference

## How to Study the Bible

### *Session 2: Introduction to Bible Study; How To Study Narrative*

#### **Introduction to Bible Study**

- I. Discuss “The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz”
  - A. How many different approaches did the student take in learning about the fish?
  - B. How would these apply to Bible Study?
  - C. How did the student feel at the beginning of his study?
  - D. Does anyone have a similar feeling sometimes in studying the Bible?
  - E. In the end what was the student’s perspective on the professor’s teaching style?
- II. Broad Types of Literature
  - A. Narrative (story)
    1. History (Genesis, Judges, Nehemiah)
    2. Parable. (Judges 9:7-15, 2 Samuel 12:1-4, Luke 15:4-6)
    3. Narrative is a series of events; the event is the main structural element
  - B. Discourse (command and instruction)
    1. Epistles. (Romans, Philippians)
    2. Sermons. (Matthew 5-7, Acts 2:14-36)
    3. Proverbs. (Proverbs, Matthew 7:1?)
    4. Discourse is a series of propositions; the proposition is the main structural element
  - C. Poetry and Apocalyptic
    1. Psalms
    2. Prophets (Isaiah, Joel)
    3. Revelation
    4. Poetry is a series of images; the image is the main structural element
- III. Importance of correctly identifying the type of literature
  - A. Respond correctly
    1. Learn from history
    2. Obey commands
    3. Adjust perspective by poetry

- B. Avoid embarrassing mistakes
  - 1. Obeying history (Acts 2:41-47; Luke 9:57-62)
  - 2. Taking poetry “literally” (Isaiah 13:1, 9-13)

- C. Fall for false teaching
  - 1. Genesis and Daniel as unhistorical

#### IV. The Universal Study Process

- A. Three basic parts
  - 1. Observation
    - a) What is there? What does it say?
    - b) Gathering the facts
  - 2. Interpretation
    - a) What do these facts mean?
    - b) Understanding the facts
  - 3. Application
    - a) What can/should we do now?
    - b) Profiting from our study

- B. Used in any field of study

- 1. Science
- 2. Literature
- 3. Farming
- 4. Construction
- 5. etc.

- C. Real examples

- 1. Genetics
  - a) Observe characteristics of human genes
  - b) Interpret the data to find which gene produces insulin
  - c) Apply this gene to a bacterium to produce large quantities of insulin for human consumption
- 2. Literature.
  - a) Observe all the ways Jane Austen portrays the clergy in her novels
  - b) Interpret the data to draw conclusions about her view of the clergy
  - c) Apply your finding to a senior thesis so you pass the course

3. Daily life
  - a) Observe that the traffic light is red
  - b) Interpret that to mean you should stop
  - c) Apply your foot to the brake
- D. OIA is not so much a Bible study method, as it is a description of how everyone successfully relates to the world around us

## How To Study Narrative

- I. Observation – What does it say?
  - A. Observing narratives
    1. Focus on the events
    2. Look for the facts within the events
    3. Details: who, what, when, where, how
    4. Clearly grasp the sequence of events
    5. Notice the stated purpose or reason behind events
    6. Notice the manner and method by which events occur
  - B. General observation
    1. Each type of literature will make some use of the characteristic elements of the others
      - a) Narratives will contain repeated and contrasted words and ideas (like discourse), and will use metaphors (like poetry) to describe people and events
      - b) Discourse passages will use events and poems to illustrate and reinforce propositions
      - c) Poetry will have historical events and propositions as their subjects
    2. The basic type of literature of a passage is determinative in interpreting it
      - a) Exodus and Numbers, not Psalm 106, determine the sequence of events in Israel's departure from Egypt
      - b) Psalms determines how we ought to respond to that event
    3. Always note the author and original audience, including their cultural setting
    4. Always note references to other parts of scripture

## II. Interpretation – What does it mean?

### A. The goal of interpretation

1. To discover the main point of the passage
2. Not to decode secret messages or to clear up all possible ambiguities

### B. Examine the parts: each event

1. What is the overall meaning of this event?
2. Why did he do \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Why did \_\_\_\_\_ happen?
4. Why were \_\_\_\_\_ involved?
5. Was this event good or bad?
6. Why did the author include this event?

### C. Examine the relationship between the parts (events) within the passage

1. How are these events connected to each other?
  - a) Repetition? Contrast? Intensification? Conclusion? Progression?
2. What is the meaning of this repetition/contrast/etc.?
3. What events caused other events?

### D. Determine the main point of the whole passage

1. What is the meaning of the whole passage?
2. The main point is the primary timeless principle revealed in this ancient text
3. Make a tentative decision about the main point
4. Test it against your initial conclusions (See III. A. and B.)
  - a) Ask “Does each verse contribute to the main point?”
  - b) If not, you may have a secondary point
5. Modify tentative main point
6. Test it again
7. Adopt final conclusion about the meaning of the whole passage
8. This is the author's main point of the passage

## III. Application – How does it apply to me?

- A. Flesh out in our 21st century context how the timeless principle of the main point works out in daily life
- B. New things to believe and remember – about God, man, the world, the church, etc.

C. New things to do

D. Specific plan of obedience

IV. Last words

A. Narrative passages tell us what other people did; they do not tell us what to do – we must figure out from the story which principles to apply to our lives

1. Luke 10:29-37 – What happened: Samaritan cared for the wounded traveler
2. What should we do? Care for lost or hurting people in our university or community