

# HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR GREATEST PROFIT

by

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

A third method of study is the Biographical.

This needs no definition. It consists in taking up the various persons mentioned in Scripture and studying their life, work and character. It is really a special form of Topical Study. It can be made very interesting and instructive. It is especially useful to the minister with a view to sermon building, but is profitable for all Christians. The following suggestions will help those who are not already experienced in this line of work.

1. Collect all the passages in the Bible in which the person to be studied is mentioned. This is readily done by turning in Strong's Concordance to the person's name, and you will find every passage in which he is mentioned given.
2. Analyze the character of the person. This will require a repeated reading of the passages in which he is mentioned. This should be done with pencil in hand, that any characteristic may be noted down at once.
3. Note the elements of power and success.
4. Note the elements of weakness and failure.
5. Note the difficulties overcome.
6. Note the helps to success.
7. Note the privileges abused.
8. Note the opportunities neglected.
9. Note the opportunities improved.

10. Note the mistakes made.

11. Note the perils avoided.

12. Make a sketch of the life in hand. Make it as vivid, living and realistic as possible. Try to reproduce the subject as a real, living man. Note the place and surroundings of the different events, e. g., Paul in Athens, Corinth, Philippi. Note the time relations of the different events. Very few people in reading the Acts of the Apostles, for example, take notice of the rapid passage of time, and so regard events separated by years as following one another in close sequence. In this connection note the age or approximate age of the subject at the time of the events recorded of him.

13. Summarize the lessons we should learn from the story of this person's life.

14. Note the person in hand in his relations to JESUS, e. g., as a type of CHRIST (Joseph, David, Solomon and others), forerunner of CHRIST, believer in CHRIST, enemy of CHRIST, servant of CHRIST, brother of CHRIST (James and Jude), friend, etc., etc.

It will be well to begin with some person who does not occupy too much space in the Bible, as, e. g., Enoch or Stephen. Of course many of the points mentioned above cannot be taken up with some characters.

Suggestive books in character studies are Stalker's *Lives of CHRIST and Paul* \*, and Stalker's *"Imago Christi"*; F. B. Meyer's *"Elijah,"* and also other Old Testament characters; Mr. Moody's *"Bible Characters."* \*

NOTE: Those books marked by an \* are posted at [www.baptistbiblebelievers.com](http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com)

A fourth method of study is the Study of Types.

We have illustrations of this in the Bible itself, as for example in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is both an interesting and instructive method of study. It shows us the most precious truths buried away in what once seemed to us a very dry and meaningless portion of the Bible. It need scarcely be said that this method of study is greatly abused and overdone in some quarters. But that is no reason why we should neglect it altogether, especially when we remember that not only Paul but JESUS were fond of this method of study. The following may serve as principles to govern us in this method of study:

1 . Be sure you have Bible warrant for your supposed type. If one gives free rein to his fancy in this matter, he can imagine types everywhere, even in places that neither the human or divine author of the book had any intention of a typical sense. Never say this is a type unless you can point to some clear passage of Scripture where the truth said to be typified is definitely taught.

2. Begin with the more simple and evident types, e.g., the Passover (comp. Exodus 12 with I Corinthians 5:7 etc)., the High Priest, the Tabernacle.

3. Be on your guard against the fanciful and overstrained. Fancy is almost sure to run away with any man who is blessed with any imagination and quickness of typical discernment, unless he holds it in check. Our typical sensitiveness and sensibleness will become both quickened and

chastened by careful and circumspect exercise.

4. In studying any passage of possible typical suggestion, look up all the Scripture references. The best collection of references is that given in "*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*."

5. Study carefully the meaning of the names of persons and places mentioned. Bible names often have a very deep and far reaching suggestiveness. Thus, for example, **Hebron**, which means "*joining together*," "*union*" or "*fellowship*," is deeply significant when taken in connection with its history, as are all the names of the Cities of Refuge, and indeed very many Scripture names. Was it accidental that Bethlehem, the name of the place where the Bread of Life was born, means "*House of bread*"?

C. H. M.'s notes on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are suggestive to one who has had little experience in the study of types.

NOTE: C.H.M.'s notes are posted at [www.baptistbiblebelievers.com](http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com)

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