

Character Bible Study

All those people in robes and sandals have something to say to us. However, for many of us, the people in the Bible seem to be part of an elite class of “Super-Saints.” We read about those who defeated mighty armies with a handful of men, witnessed miracles on a grand scale, or clearly heard the voice of God Himself. We will sometimes think to ourselves these men and women are different than us and although their stories are really cool, their lives do not really relate to our lives. Yet despite their distance from us in time and culture, the men and women in the Bible were real, everyday humans. Even Elijah, one of the greatest men of all time, is described as *“a man just like us”* (James 5:17). The people whose stories are recorded in Scripture struggled to follow God against the grain of their culture, lead the unappreciative, fought temptation, dealt with loss, sinned, failed, and learned to walk by faith just as we do.

The Holy Spirit has much to teach us as we study the lives of these individuals. As you employ the simple Bible study method that follows, you can begin to see them as they were: flesh-and-blood people whose lives have a crucial message for your life today. Our stories intersect with their stories in the bigger story of God!

1. Pick a Character

First, choose a bible character you are interested in studying in the Old Testament. It might be someone well known (for example: Abraham, David, Esther, or Noah), or it might be someone you’d like to know more about (for example: Ruth, Deborah, Caleb, or Samson). Record your selection at the top of the page as your title.

2. Select and Study Passages

Next, choose and select the passages from the Bible you will be using in your study. List the passages of Scripture you use in your paper. Some people in the Bible have little written about them, and you will want to include every reference to them in your study. Others, such as David, have so much written about them that you will have to select certain passages you think are most significant or limit your study to a particular event or season in their lives.

3. Write out a Brief Biographical Sketch

Read through each of your selected Scripture passages several times and meditate on them. Then begin writing a brief biography of the person. These are simply the facts of your character’s life, without any personal interpretation. Include such things as the meaning of their name, when and where they lived, and their family background. Record any unusual influences or historical events that shaped their life and thinking, as well as when he or she lived during the history of Israel. Write out the major events in their life. Mention the growth (or decrease) of their relationship with God, their crowning achievement and contribution, failures and mistakes, influence on the nation and family, or anything else of interest about them. This section should be a 2-5 paragraph summary of their life.

4. Identify Key Verse(s)

Pick a verse (or several verses) that best describes this person. This could be a passage about the person's character or a verse that summarizes his or her life and impact. Record this verse in your paper.

5. Life Lessons

Continue reading through your selected passages and your biographical sketch again. What do you see as the leading lesson or lessons of this person's life? Perhaps your key verse holds a clue to the leading lesson. It might be positive or negative, something worthy of following or something that should be avoided. Explain why you think this is the main lesson.

When you have decided on the leading lesson or lessons (2 at the most) for your subject, write them down. Then elaborate on why you think these are the leading lessons to be learned from this person's life. This section should be 2-4 paragraphs.

6. Application

Continue to review your bible study by reading your Scripture passages again. From your study of your biblical character, ask the Lord to show a principle you should apply to your own life or some characteristic you need to build or strengthen (or avoid) in your life. Take plenty of time to pray, think through, and process what God is speaking to you. Write 1-2 paragraphs on why the Holy Spirit is highlighting this particular area for you.

Finally, write 1-2 paragraphs on how you can partner with the Holy Spirit to apply this to your own life and be conformed more into the image of Christ. That is, how are you going to grow in this revelation that the Holy Spirit has given you, what are your action steps of obedience, and how will you take these truths and walk in greater holiness and the life of Christ. Be as specific as possible. Write out an example of how you, by the grace of God, might make this change.