

Module 8 Lecture

We are coming to the final stages of our study time and today we want to focus in on deriving spiritual principles. A spiritual principle is a biblical truth that never changes and can be found from Genesis 1 to Rev 22. That is because our God does not change. He is the same yesterday as He is today as He will be tomorrow. In fact that is a spiritual principle: God is unchanging.

In our study we want to focus in on this step because this is what will lead us to do our application questions with excellence and excellence is the only criteria that matters in the study of God's Word. With that in mind, let's walk through this lesson using the powerpoint slides I have prepared for you.

Slide Two: review the powerpoint slide on Bloom's Taxonomy. You will note that the step of Analysis is the fourth ladder rung. That means that you have completed the first three and now have some idea of what is in the passage you have been studying. You know the facts of the situation, you are beginning to comprehend what is being taught, you can find ways to apply the story to your life but now you are ready to dig deeper and analyze the story in greater detail.

Slide Three: As with any study you must begin with the whole passage in order to keep the ideas in context. That means once again you read it as if it is a new passage to your eyes. Read it with excitement and with a vision to know, to understand, and to visualize with your mind what is happening, where it is happening etc. After reading it once through go back and see if you can break it down into sequential steps: what happened first, second and so on. Look for some key words that will help you to understand the truth being taught.

Slide Four: See if you can answer these questions before you derive any principles. Are there any categories noted. For example is the author zeroing in on topics such as sin, forgiveness, covetousness, submission or others? Sometimes there is one or more topic under discussion as in the case of Jonah. In that book we see disobedience, submission, nationalism, distrust, obedience. In Mark 8 Jesus is teaching his disciples to discern hypocrisy and that is the topic He is teaching by his questions and comments. In John 4 Jesus is teaching his disciples as well as the reader that God has no preferential treatment between Jew and Gentile. Salvation is for all.

In addition, look for any comparisons and how it is presented. If you find the words "like" or "as" you might have discovered a comparison passage. For example look at this passage from Matthew: 11:16 "To what should I compare this generation? They are *like* children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another." In this we see that Jesus is comparing His generation to children who vacillate from one activity to the next and are never satisfied. Or Luke 6:36 "be merciful as your Father is merciful." Thus man is to emulate or compare his lifestyle to God's.

Slide Five: As you read, look for reasons that will explain the passage in greater detail. For example often a passage will begin with "therefore". When you see "therefore" ask what it is there for. What came before and what follows make a cohesive statement. In Ezekiel 34 God is giving the reason for his people's straying condition. It is the fault of the false shepherds and now God will bring about His judgment based upon the facts that are laid out. Two times God tells the shepherds to hear what He is saying and what He is about to do.

Slide Six: Now it is time to be a scientist and dissect this account from top to bottom. Begin by asking the “5 W’s and H” questions of the passage. Determine the key character(s) in the story; what are the factual details of the story, where does the story take place and when does it take place. With each question begin to formulate a picture that you can visualize. God is not the author of confusion and He always provides exactly what details we need. He does this because He wants us to be immersed in His love and His plan for us and for others.

Slide Seven: Sometimes it helps if we diagram the account through stick figures, drawings of the event, adding timelines and maps so we begin to see the account come to life. For example in the book of Ruth if you consult a map you can begin to see the length of the journey Elimelech took to take his family to Moab and then also in reverse you can see the journey Naomi and Ruth took to come back to Bethlehem. Begin to follow the map and note the terrain, the rivers, valleys, cities, etc. that each had to face. Who were the Moabites? What was their religion? Why would Elimelech go to that nation? Begin to ask what he would forfeit by doing that. What were the consequences that happened because he had a weak faith? Was it a weak faith? How do you know? Once when I was teaching the geography of Israel I made a salt map with my fourth graders. I saw the rivers, the plateaus, the mountains and when we added the cities we began to see where Jesus walked, where the people of the OT walked and it made the passages we were studying come alive. So take time to do some of these things so you begin to “live out” the geography.

Slide Eight: Still focusing in on Mark 8, you can begin to ask the questions of what was Jesus’ point in asking the disciples questions such as he did. He was probing to unearth their understanding of the Pharisees and Herod’s beliefs and He wanted them to see beneath the exterior or outward façade of each. Jesus wanted the disciples to see them as they really were: religious outwardly but inwardly apostate because what they said and what they lived. On the other hand Herod was not a religious person and in fact he was the more apostate of the two as is noted in that he beheaded John the Baptist. So why did Jesus put them together as examples as those for whom they are to beware? It is a warning to us that in all of life we will meet both categories of men: those who spout truth but do not live it and those who are pointedly against all of truth and live that as well. We must then be cautious to whom we turn our attention. We must be discerning as to both groups so that neither one turn our heads. We remember the account of the man born blind so as to bring glory to God and his parents answer to the Pharisees. The parents were fearful of the Pharisees and Jesus did not want his disciples to fear them as these parents did. In addition, the religious leaders feared Herod and Jesus warned the disciples that Herod as well as any other leader are placed there by God and are not to be feared. Peter and John learned that lesson well as we can see by what they said when brought before the Sanhedrin: “we must obey God rather than men” Acts 5: 29. This then is a principle: Obedience to God supersedes any of man’s ways.

Slide Nine: We have talked much about the characters of the Pharisees and Herod and you can use that discussion to further dissect the characters in each passage you study. God has placed characters before us so that we can glean truths by observing, listening and seeking to understand each character. The author Alan Redpath wrote an

excellent book “The Making of a Man of God¹” about King David. He says in his foreword:

“The Bible never flatters its heroes. It tells us the truth about each of them in order that against the background of human breakdown and failure we magnify the grace of God and recognize that it is the delight of the Spirit of God to work upon the platform of human impossibilities. As we consider the record of Bible characters, how often we find ourselves looking into a mirror.” Wayne Cordeiro wrote in his book “The Divine Mentor:”² “Gods has given the people of His book the assignment to mentor you and me.” That is how we are to use this tool of analysis.

Further as you analyze make timelines so you can see when the account began and when it ended, what is the political system at that time, who is in power, how does this affect the people of that time? We have talked about the geographical link so we will not go deeper into this at this point, it is merely a reminder that it is an important step for you to utilize. It is especially relevant for our children so that the Bible comes alive.

Slide Ten: Now it is time to write out your spiritual principles. Using Mark 8 as our sample passage we can see that Jesus told the disciples to beware of the Pharisees and Herod. What are the principles here?

1. Be discerning of all peoples and their talk and walk.
2. Personally use this as a warning to yourself that your walk and talk should match.
3. Recall God’s blessings in tough times

Slide Eleven: Now it is time for you to go back and work on Matt 14. List the principles you see presented. List them on your worksheet under the section: Principles. Be ready to share them with someone or just write about them in your journal entry for this day.

¹ Redpath, Alan, “The Making of a Man of God” Published: Fleming Revell, 2007. pg 9

² Cordeiro, Wayne, “The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior” Published: Bethany House, 2007. pg 46