

What? Why? When? How? Where? Who?

BACKGROUND THOUGHTS

This is a great way to prepare a Bible study on a theme for a speaking engagement, in response to a query, or just to build your own faith.

This method is good because it:

- Needs only a Bible, a Concordance and a notebook;
- Takes as much time as you want to give it;
- Can readily be turned into a teaching;
- Can help you decide if a teaching is true or not.

“Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” Acts 17:11

As with the “character quality method” (III), you gather Bible references on a chosen theme using a Concordance or online resource – then question each reference. The references become witnesses in your enquiry into a subject that interests you.

I will walk about in freedom,
for I have sought out your precepts.
I will speak of your statutes before kings
and will not be put to shame,
for I delight in your commands
because I love them.
... The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
Ps 119:45-47, 130

Limit the number of your questions! You only need a few. On a big topic, or one that's new to you, a single question will do.

If times are tough, you might want to know what the Bible promises God will help you endure, so that you can pray that back to him. So, you would look up **endure** /s /d /ance /ing, and perhaps synonyms like **steadfast**, and ask (1) "What should we endure?" (2) "Is there anything we aren't supposed to endure?", and (3) "What is my part in doing the enduring, and what help does God promise?"

'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matt 7:7

Don't forget to pray when you start this method (and any Bible study) – the Holy Spirit is your guide, and God really wants you to get insight.

METHOD – 6 Cs

- 1) **C**hoose your **theme** - what do you want to find out, explore or prove?
- 2) **C**ollect your verses - which **key words** are essential? Try to keep it to only one or two, but include derivatives (eg tenses, plurals and derivatives of the main word)
- 3) **C**ompile your **questions** (two or three is best – no more than five!) Write each question at the top of a separate column, a different sheet of paper or page in a text document or spreadsheet
- 4) **C**ross-examine the references; write answers under the headings.
- 5) **C**onclusions; **summarise the answers** you've found in a simple statement – aim for something you could explain to somebody else in 1-2 minutes
- 6) **C**ompose an **application** (see study I, point 3 – personal, practical, possible, provable)

SAMPLES

- What are the benefits of WISDOM in the Wisdom literature? What characterises a WISE person?
- What are the rewards & fruit of OBEDIENCE? (OBEY, OBEYS) What are the results of DISOBEDIENCE?
- How does God GUIDE us? (GUIDANCE) How can we know his WILL?
- How does Jesus say we should PRAY? (for this you'd restrict your word search to the Gospels & Acts) Do the other New Testament writers say anything different about PRAYER? (PRAYING, PRAYS, INTERCEDE)
- What is HELL like? (HADES) What's it for? Who will go there, and who won't?
- What do the Psalms tell about how are we to PRAISE and WORSHIP? What is true praise for God? What does God say about someone who PRAISES him?

EXAMPLE

How to hate better!

1) Theme: "Hate" is a strong word, yet the Bible says there are things God hates.
What does he hate? Should we hate, too?

2) Verses:

HATE: Ps 5:5, 45:7, 97:10, 119:104,163, 139:21, Pr 8:13, 13:5, Isa 61:8, Eze 35:6, Am 5:15, Mal 2:16, Lk 14:26, Ro 12:9

HATES: Pr 6:16, 15:27, Jn 12:25, Jd 23

HATED: Heb 1:9

3) Questions to ask of each verse: **What are things God HATES? What must godly people HATE?**

4) Answers

God hates

- i Iniquity, those who devise wicked schemes (Prov 6:16, 8:13, Isa 61:8)
- ii All who do wrong, who rush to evil (Ps 5:5, Prov 6:16)
- iii Liars and false witnesses (Prov 6:16, 8:13)
- iv Pride (Prov 6:16, 8:13)
- v Those who cause dissension (Prov 6:16)
- vi Divorce (Mal 2:16)
- vii Violent crime, robbery (Isa 61:8)
- viii Shedding innocent blood (Prov 6:16)

Godly people should hate

- i Evil (Ps 97:10, Pr 8:13, Am 5:15, Ro 12:9), wickedness (Ps 45:7, Heb 1:9), choosing wrong path (Ps 119:104)
 - ii Falsehood and lying (Ps 119:163, Prov 13:5)
 - iii Bribery (Prov 15:27)
 - iv Violence (Eze 35:6)
 - v Those who hate God (Ps 139:21)
- (and, hyperbolically)
- vi Our own lives (Jn 12:25)
 - vii Father and mother (Lk 14:26)
 - viii Clothing stained by corrupted flesh (Jd 23)
- (these show intensity of love for God by comparison)

5) Conclusions

God's hatreds all seem to be in the realm of our human tendency toward wickedness; evil thoughts, plans and actions. There is a lot in the Bible that God *warns us* about, but the things he *hates* seem to involve breaking relationships (those who cause dissension, schemers, violent criminals and robbers, those who choose to divorce, false witnesses).

There are overlaps between what God hates and what humans can "virtuously" hate – though the list for us reads more like things that pervert justice (lying, false testimony, bribery and bloodshed), with an additional category of "those who hate God". Thus, God's hatred is rooted in a desire for good relationships; ours should be rooted in a desire for God's will to be done and for justice. Does that mean we should hate whatever opposes the Kingdom? Jesus's addition of hating 'our own lives' and 'father and mother' support that – the idea that our love for him and his Kingdom should be so ardent that others might feel "hated" by comparison. Jude's comment is an extreme version of "love the sinner, hate the sin".

6) Application: Pray for God's view of justice and injustice, and, the next time I encounter an incidence of false testimony, bribery, oppression or violence, intervene to stop it. Report to {NAME} on how that goes!

NOW, YOUR TURN

This week, we're going to do a Thematic Study on "friendship". Use a Concordance or online tool and find references which include:

FRIEND /S /LY FRIENDSHIP and also FELLOWSHIP, as it is used in the New Testament

Ask the questions:

How can I be a friend of God?

How are God's people to show friendship to one another?

What is promised for God's people if they are true, deep friends?

We will be meeting in our Life Groups again next week, so write out your responses, in line with the example above, and take them along to your next Life Group. Encouraging one another with your thoughts on Christian friendship. Try to use your "application" and let your group know if it was successful.