

LEADER NOTES FOR A CHARACTER ANALYSIS

LAKEFIELD MINISTRIES

This section is not required reading to complete this type of study. This section is for reference only. It is here to help study leaders and those who may not have a lot experience reading or studying the bible.

What is a Character Study?

A Character Study is the study of a particular Bible Character.

You have to remember that the characters in the Bible were just like us!

In James 5:17, James is reminding the people he is writing to that Elijah, one of the Major Prophets in the Old Testament, was a man just like us.

“Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.” James 5:17, NIV

We tend to consider the characters described in the Bible as being much different from us. It can be a hard thing to fathom, that those of us living today are just like those that lived back in the days recorded in the Bible. The characters in the Bible were people just like us.

Think of it This Way

What if books of the Bible were going to be written about our generation?

How would the book read?

What type of character would we be?

How would we fit into the story of the Bible?

What characters in the Bible would we most likely be like as individuals?

What about as a community or a nation?

This perspective can help you get nearer to the idea that the God of the Bible is alive today and that He is involved in your life.

As you study characters of the Bible, think to yourself, "What is my story?"

- What is my story so far?
- Where have I come from in the past?
- What is my story today?
- Where am I headed in the future?

If you are not sure where you are in life, what the future holds, and you could use a good dose of wisdom, you may want to consider what James recommends in James 1:5.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Do a verse analysis on James 1:5. See if this verse may not apply directly to you, too. Be encouraged. If you are still here, God is not finished with you yet.

As you study the characters in the Bible you will see that even the greatest Bible characters, from Moses to Matthew and the rest, all had something they had to deal with. You could say that Adam and Eve had some marital challenges, Moses' relationship with God took a long time to develop, Jacob's family, the very heads of the tribes of Israel could be considered a bit dysfunctional. Esther had to come to grips with her commitment to God, Naomi and Ruth had some tough times and Rahab had a past. Even great men like King David, Solomon, Paul, and Peter, all had what we would call today "issues".

Everyone God deals with has issues. He just knows how to handle people with issues.

Everyone has a story. Every story has something we can learn from. As Paul said in his letter to the Romans, *“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope.”* Romans 5:14 (NIV)

Even Elijah, the man who called for lightning from Heaven, was a man with a nature just like ours.

It can be easier to learn from people than it is from a book!

Learning from other people that we can relate to can be the best way to learn. That is why character studies are great – especially if you remember that even men like Elijah had a nature just like ours.

(Step 1) Pick a character any character

You can pick any character you like. If this is your first time to do a Character Study or if you are leading someone through Master the Basics that has never done a Character Study, you may not want to start with one of the major characters. A Character Study on Jesus, Moses, the apostle Paul, or Peter, could get pretty lengthy.

Gideon can be a great place to start. Most of the text on Gideon is contained in just a few chapters. Other good ones may include Samson, Esther, Boaz, Mordecai, and even Ahithophel, one of David’s counselors.

You do not always have to pick a “good guy” either. A study on Pharaoh, Balaam, and Nebuchadnezzar can also provide great insight into how God deals with people.

(Step 2) List Verses Relating to the Character

Getting a list of verses is pretty easy as long as you know how to spell the character’s name.

We recommend The Blue Letter Bible at www.blueletterbible.com. It is a great online Bible resource. The Blue Letter Bible is free and they do not have any marketing pop ups or advertising. The tool is supported by donations so you may get an occasional note asking you if you would like to donate. We encourage you to do so. Nothing is really “free”. A lot of time and energy goes into the resource.

The Blue Letter Bible allows you to search on any word including names. You can use several different Bible translations. You can even set up an account and note your preferences for translations, formats, and other features. There are several resources available such as Bible commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and concordances.

(Step 3) Read the Verses and the Surrounding Verses, Listing Key Points

Read through the verses. You do not need to do a Verse Analysis on each one but it helps to keep the approach in mind. Make a note of those verses that relate to your character and appear to be key places to expand your reading.

Expand the context of the verses, just like you learned when you learned to do a Verse Analysis. Go forward and backward from the verse you start with until you get a feel for how the facts in the story of the character develop and come together.

(Step 4) Draft a Brief Character Profile

Your goal is to get a sense of the nature of the character you are studying. You will gain insight the more you read. List the things that stand out to you. You could start with bullet points, noting the verse reference, or approach it in paragraph form.

Try to formulate a profile of the character. Their history, their strengths, weaknesses, situation and challenges. Try to approach this step as if you were preparing to make an informal presentation to a small group.

What are the key points you would include? What would be the theme of this character's life? How did this person relate to God? How did God relate to this person?

Try to assemble a profile into an outline, an information presentation, or notes you may have prepared if you had to give a brief speech on the character. This approach will help you organize your thoughts.

(Step 5) Describe How you Relate to this Character

Take the same approach here that you did to put together the character profile. Only this time, consider the perspective of how you relate to this character.

- What do you have in common?
- What do you not have in common?
- What were your impressions of the person?
- What things do you have in common with this person?

(Step 6) Referring to step 4 and step 5, write a summary of what you have learned.

Put together your thoughts from step 4 and step 5. Combine your character profile with how you relate to the character.

- Write out what you have learned.
- What do you see that you can apply to your life?
- What is it that concerns you?
- What inspires you?

Organize your thoughts as if you were presenting your study to a small group. Even put together an outline with an introduction, three or four main points, and a conclusion or summary.

(Step 7) List questions from your study, topics, key verses, or other characters that you may want to study further at a later time.

As you have already learned as you learned to do a Book Study and a Topical Study, listing out your questions with the notion that you will pursue answers, now or someday in the future, is one of the greatest ways to gain wisdom and to grow.

List these things out. Hang on to your notes. Even share your thoughts with a friend or your group leader

A final Tip

Keep it Simple

As you have seen through each study, we encourage you to keep it simple. Do not get “hung up” if you struggle with something. Do not be discouraged if you do not understand something or if you do not believe you have some revolutionary thought or insight. The more you read the more you grow.