

Synthetic Bible Study – Part 4

Howard Hendricks

I. Procedural Techniques.

A. Ransack the book.

1. Nothing is left unturned.
2. A process of intensive exploration.
3. You assume the role of a biblical detective.
4. How?
 - a. Repeated reading.
 - 1) You never exhaust the Word of God's insights.
 - 2) It is impossible for one man to master more than one book of the Bible in a lifetime.
 - 3) You have to cultivate good habits.
 - 4) Tenney's suggestions for determining a book's purpose.
 - a) Main theme.
 - b) Development of the theme.
 - c) Unraveling of the author's argument.
 - d) Development of the outline.
 - 5) During incubation is when the thoughts start to come together.
 - b. Prolonged meditation.
 - 1) Live with a book - the saturation process.
 - a) This is like living with a person. You get to know it by sustained exposure.
 - 2) You will know you have arrived in the text when you can close your Bible at anywhere in the text and think the book forward and backwards...then you are ready to study it.
 - a) You need to start small.

c. Bombard the text with questions.

- 1) The intelligent man is the one who knows how to ask questions.
- 2) Be okay with unanswered questions.

6. Jonah.

a. Possible themes.

- 1) God's concern for the lost in contrast to man's - a book that contrasts two hearts.
- 2) The wrong brand of disobedience - legalism.
- 3) A man with the right message, but the wrong motive.
- 4) God's sovereignty.
- 5) God's mercy.
- 6) Ethnic conflict.
- 7) The effects of disobedience.
- 8) A sloppy view of God.

b. Many of the themes reveal some of the attributes of God.

- 1) According to Strong every major attribute of God's is found in the book of Jonah.

c. A word about the process.

- 1) It triggers your thinking.
- 2) You want to keep feeding your mind.
- 3) The process will help you absorb the book.

B. Analyze and catalogue the structure of the book.

1. Example of Epistolary structure: the structure of the letters. (Ephesians as an example)

a. Introduction.

b. Doctrinal section.

c. Practical section.

d. Conclusion.

2. Things to look for.

- a. Look for things that are alike.
- b. Look for things that are different.
- c. Look for things that are repeated.
- d. Look for cause and effect.
- e. Look for truth from general to specific (a favorite technique of Luke).
- f. Look for progression.
- g. Look for question followed by answer.
- h. Look for emphasis by space.

3. Helps: books by Wald, Tenney and Traina.

4. Structure has to do with the relationship between parts.

- a. For example, the miracles in Mark are related to the parables in Mark.

C. Assignment: return to Jonah.

- 1. Title each paragraph personally and creatively.
- 2. Find the relationships between the paragraphs.

Application questions:

1. What struck you the most about the study of Jonah and the insights collected?

2. Why does the speaker emphasize “ransacking the book?” When have you read a book of the Bible enough to have mastered it?

3. Take a look at Jonah in a text that is not broken into sections already, if available. Try and discover the structure of the book on your own, titling the paragraphs as the speaker suggests. What discoveries have you made? What are the relationships between the paragraphs?
