

## Teaching the Bible with a Big Story Framework: Taking His Story to Theirs

Teri Anderson, presented at CDM Women's Leadership 2025 Workshop

This summary of Bible study tips is not an exhaustive study of techniques, but a few key principles based on the Big Picture Framework that can help enhance your study of any given passage. But do remember that the primary tool needed is the Holy Spirit. *I pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."* (Ephesians 1:17) These suggestions can only bring clarity to the work God does in one's heart through HIS Word. *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."* (1 Corinthians 2:12-13.)

1. **PRAYER** — *Truth is revealed...cannot be understood by man apart from God's imparting understanding.*

2. **OBSERVATION** — *What does this passage say?*

- Ask Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
  - Who was the author? Who was the original audience?
  - What is the setting? When and where was it written?
  - What is the passage's genre (prophecy, poetry, narrative, wisdom, etc.)
- Identify THEMES. Mark KEY WORDS (words that are repeated over two times).
  - Key words can lead to SUBJECTS.
  - NOTE: Take some time to make a list of all the facts concerning each Key Word and the SUBJECTS will "reveal themselves!"
  - Subjects can lead to the MAJOR THEMES, the "why's."
  - It can also be helpful to create an outline of the passage, chapter, or book. Compare your outline to a trustworthy commentary or Bible study notes.

3. **CONTEXT** — *How does this passage fit into Scripture? Don't isolate the passage.*

- What is the **narrow** context? How does this passage fit into the paragraph or the chapter?
- What is the **broad**er context? How does this passage fit into the book?
- What is the **big picture** context? How does this passage fit into all of Scripture?

4. **FRAMEWORK** — *How does this passage fit into the big picture framework of redemptive history?*

**CREATION.** This redemptive plan for God's PEOPLE begins to be revealed at the CREATION of time & space, when humanity was created in God's image to live in relationship with Him and to reflect His Glory.

**FALL.** But what was "very good" didn't last & Genesis describes the FALL. Satan undermines God's creation order by tempting Eve. Adam and Eve sin, breaking Covenant with God; death enters the created world. Individualism and self-rule characterize humanity.

**REDEMPTION.** God did not destroy Adam & Eve, but **revealed the Covenant Promise.** In Genesis 3:15, God decrees his redeeming provision for His People to dwell in His Presence. He would still be their God and they would be His people; He would dwell among them. He came, He called, He clothed. WE live in this phase, God restoring everything broken at the Fall for His glory. (Romans 11:33-12:2) Much of Scripture falls into the Redemption phase. We can also follow Redemption with a timeline of where God's Presence dwells after the Fall. This timeline of redemptive history has eternal implication and meaning.

- **Garden:** Adam & Eve walked with Him in the Garden, the First Sanctuary. Although God moved mankind out of the Garden because His Presence cannot tolerate sin, He promises that His Kingdom will come again; He provides His promised PRESENCE with His called PEOPLE in a PLACE where He dwells. (Genesis 1-3)
- **Tabernacle:** In Exodus 40:3-4, we see God's Presence moving to the Tabernacle in the form of the glory cloud and the pillar of fire, the visible manifestation of the PROMISE that God would be PRESENT, that He would continue to dwell there among His PEOPLE.
- **Temple:** God had Solomon build the Temple, where He again visibly manifests His PRESENCE with His PEOPLE when the glory cloud moves out of the Tabernacle into the Temple. God expects that his people will be a "light to the nations" in all times and places. The earthly temple was merely a representation or shadow of a better way to come.
- **Jesus:** Then in John 1:14, we are told that better way had arrived when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
  - The Greek word for "dwelt" means "to tabernacle." God's glory was then revealed in God's Son, fully Man and fully God. His Presence is quite literal and touchable during His time on earth. God's revelation was with us as "the Word." His sinless life uniquely qualifies Him to atone for the sins of His people. (Romans 5:17)

- At the Cross, the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death pays the penalty owed to God by sinners and a way to live in His presence in Eternity. (Romans 3:21-26; I Peter 3:18)
- His resurrection demonstrates His power over sin and death. (Romans 6:4)
- **Bride of Christ:** After Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, we, **His people**, the Body, become His dwelling place **through the power of the Holy Spirit**, both individually & collectively as the Church, as the Bride of Christ. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Gentiles are even more directly enfolded. Galatians 3:7 notes, "it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." The covenant promise is now global: The Kingdom of God is made up of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

**"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."** (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19)

**CONSUMMATION** The ULTIMATE re-creation of both His People and His World will occur at the Second Coming when God brings us again literally face to face with our redeemer in the New Heavens and the New Earth. (Rev 21:2-4, 22) The covenant promise will be completely fulfilled at GLORIFICATION.

#### 4b. FRAMEWORK identified –

- *How does this passage fit into the framework of redemptive history?*
  - ❖ CREATION
  - ❖ FALL
  - ❖ REDEMPTION
  - ❖ CONSUMATION
- If the passage falls under the Redemption stage, during which era of God's Presence with His People does it fall into or reference? Identifying this aspect of the Church's development might also be considered determining the passage's historical or cultural context. Checking with other translations can be helpful here as well.

5. **INTERPRETATION** — **What does this passage say?** We assume that scripture is indeed God's inerrant Word, and that an accurate interpretation exists. *"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..."* (2 Timothy 3:16)

- **Watch out for common contextual errors here!**
  - **Grammar errors:** not considering specific root words in the original language; they may be translated the same but have different meanings (i.e. world) or different sentence structures.
  - **World view errors:** assuming the mindset of our current era instead of the culture during which it was written. This does not mean truth cannot be applied across cultures. God's truth is timeless and not relative. (i.e. Boaz removing his sandal before Ruth)

**6. CORRELATION — How does this passage fit together with other Scripture?** Interpreting scripture with scripture is another foundational premise of accurate study. Because God's word is inerrant, neither conclusions nor application can contradict other scripture.

**7. APPLICATION — How does the passage apply to us?**

- Individually: When the redeemed study God's Word, we are re-created. Application shows the evidence of that growth, the sanctification as God transforms us. To be TRANSFORMED is the aim of all Biblical teaching as explained in Romans 12: 1-2 *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* God is glorified in our transformation.
  - When we believe that we are each rooted in this time and this place in redemptive history by God, we will see how all of our relationships are interrelated and not accidental. Our transformed mind—the knowledge of this reality—assures us that God has provided the grace we need to invest in nurturing, mentoring relationships that build up His Church, all the overflow of a grateful heart. Some individual transformation from studying the word might include repentance, faith, service, evangelism, etc.
- Corporately: A biblical, redemptive perspective understands that our union with Christ unites us to one another. This privilege carries the responsibility to share our gifts & graces for the mutual good. Application should go beyond the individual and bring guidance and growth for the community. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*
  - Studying Scripture is a quest for the true meaning that God intended, but a biblical truth may have many faceted applications for Living Covenantally.
  - The Bible teaches us that the desired results of discipleship are these:
    - ❖ Kingdom-focused heart
    - ❖ Biblically reformed mind
    - ❖ Service driven life

**God's Kingdom:** God already receives the eternal praise of every creature by establishing His glorious kingdom on earth. In the opening of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus' words show the importance of God's kingdom: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10) Jesus' words here emphasize that the foremost goal of history is the glory and honor of God Himself. Yet, His words also indicate that God will receive this glory through the coming of His kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. We are in the metaphorical bus named, "The Already," driving toward redemptive history's destination, "The Not Yet," the goal and destiny that God has decreed.

- Through all phases of Redemptive History, God calls us to fill the earth with people & ideas & culture & communities & art & science, etc.! It is ALL His Kingdom. When God redeems us, He uses us to glorify Him, working through us, to be salt and light in His world, broken at the Fall, redeemed through Jesus. But it is only God who redeems and transforms.
- How can we summarize the thesis of this meta-narrative that we call Covenant theology? It is the story about God's Grace. God PROMISES to call His PEOPLE for His PURPOSE into His PRESENCE, the PLACE where He dwells. (Gen 17:7). Our destination is the "New Jerusalem," the City of God. To borrow from the well-known praise of Revelation 11: 15, at the end of history "the kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Richard Pratt).
- Using the overarching Biblical meta-narrative grid, we can tackle **any** book of the Bible or topic. The Covenant of Grace, redemptive history, is the content of all Biblical teaching. The context of Biblical teaching is relationships. We are indeed, to think Biblically and to live Covenantally.
- Ministry should always be Word-based and relationally driven. We seek to develop true covenant community embracing the design and mission of women. How we approach women's ministry or how we encourage and equip women in our circles of influence or any other topic must be grounded in this big picture of redemption. The accurate study of God's Word, seeking HIS truth, is foundational to all we do.

## Applying the Big Story Framework to Specific Scripture Case Study

Scripture Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Observation (What does this passage say?):**

- Ask who, what, when, where, why and how?
- Original audience? Author? Genre?
- Key words?

### **Context (How does this passage fit....?):**

- Narrow context (...into the chapter)?
- Broader context (...into the book)?
- Big Picture context (...into all of Scripture)?

### **Framework (How does this passage fit into Redemptive History?):**

- Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation (Restoration)

### **Interpretation (What does this passage mean?):**

- Watch out for grammar/world-view errors!

### **Correlation (How does this passage fit with other passages of Scripture?):**

### **Application (How does this apply to me/us to respond?):**

- Individual response? Corporate response?
- What discussion questions might be useful?
- Head, Heart, Hands?

Studying Scripture together sanctifies us to glorify God as we live out our faith, investing in things that are eternal, taking His Story to theirs.