

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

Lesson 32 – The Writing of the Old Testament (Teacher's Lesson)

Study Notes:

Narrative

Many times, the use of the word “stories” implies that the events depicted are not true, as in “bedtime stories.” Explain that, although the Biblical narrative is in story form, and although it does not give every detail, what it given in the Biblical narrative continues to be historically reliable.

1. *Genesis 3:1-6*

This is the story of the fall of man in the garden of Eden. What Adam and Eve did by disobeying God was clearly a bad example for us. The passage does not explicitly state that Adam and Eve sinned, but it is clear from the results of their actions (shown in the rest of the chapter.)

2. *Exodus 17:5-7*

In this example, the people of Israel complained against God because they were thirsty. God gave Moses specific instructions on how to draw water from the rock, and he obeyed, thus demonstrating a good example of obedience.

3. *Numbers 20:7-12*

This passage is an interesting discussion to be read carefully. Although Moses does the same thing as the previous example, in this case it is a bad example, because he did not obey the specific instructions of the Lord. On the contrary, he was confident of previous success. We see that God disapproves of his actions here and from this we know that it was a bad example, even though the outward result was successful in drawing water from the rock.

4. *Esther 2:2-4, 12-17*

This passage is more difficult and people often disagree if Esther is a good example or not. She went to the king at night and did not return until morning, which could be questionable conduct, but she also won the favor of all who saw her.” (Esther 2:15)

The Law

In discussing this section, it is important to note that when we consider the Law as God's Word to you, we do not diminish its authority. What we are doing is putting its authority in proper perspective. Jesus did the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5

and 6). When He said, “You have heard it said...but I tell you...” He is not changing the meaning of the commandments, but is bringing out the historical and cultural context.

1. Do not kill. True X False ___
(Exodus 20:13)
2. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk. True X False ___
(Deuteronomy 14:21)
3. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. True X False ___
(Leviticus 19:19)
4. Do not drink alcohol. True ___ False X
(However, see the vow of the Nazirite in Numbers 6)

Prophecy

Your students may not be able to buy good study Bibles, or Bible Handbooks. Consider investing in a “reference library” for your church that your people could borrow.

Prophecy needs careful interpretation, so as not to give the prophets words that are not there.

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|---------|---|
| Ezekiel | Was not allowed to cry when his wife died. (Ez. 24:15-17) |
| Micah | He said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) |
| Daniel | He survived the lion’s den. (Da. 6:1-23) |
| Amos | “Let righteousness roll on like a never-failing stream!” (Am. 5:24) |

Wisdom

Ecclesiastes needs special care in interpretation. The main point is that you must consider the book as a whole, or you will get the wrong idea. Without the conclusion found in 12:13-14, the whole book will give a cynical and desperate picture of life.

~~“The Lord helps those who help themselves.”~~

“It is better to live in the corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife.” (21:9)

~~“A stitch in time saves nine.”~~

“A cheerful heart is good medicine.” (17:22)

Psalms

Interpreting the psalms is easier when we think of them as songs. The most important thing to remember is that you must not interpret the psalms as much as experience them.

- Psalm 39 – Lament
- Psalm 75 – Thanksgiving
- Psalm 104 – Hymn of Praise
- Psalm 78 – History of Salvation

Lesson 32 – The Writing of the Old Testament

The Bible is not only composed of many different books written by many different authors, but it also has many different types of writing. In this lesson, we will study some of the various literary styles in the Old Testament. Knowing these styles will help us to better understand and interpret Scripture.

Narrative

Narrative simple means stories. In the Bible, the stories are about what God has done for and through His people. This is the most common type of writing in the Bible. Some important guidelines for understanding narrative are:

1. The Bible reports what people did, not necessarily what they should have done. What someone did is often a bad example for us, and the story itself does not always categorically indicate what it was.
2. The narratives of the Bible do not always teach directly, but may illustrate or imply a teaching that is taught directly in another portion of the Bible.
3. Not all of the details that we want to know are included in the narrative. What is given is what the author, who was inspired by God, thought was important for us to know.

To test your interpretive skills, read the passages below and check whether the given example for the person in the narrative was good or bad.

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|-------------------------------|----------|---------|
| 1. <i>Genesis 3:1-6</i> | Good ___ | Bad ___ |
| 2. <i>Exodus 17:5-7</i> | Good ___ | Bad ___ |
| 3. <i>Numbers 20:7-12</i> | Good ___ | Bad ___ |
| 4. <i>Esther 2:2-4, 12-17</i> | Good ___ | Bad ___ |

Some good Old Testament narrative examples are:

Genesis 6:9-9:17 (Noah)

Genesis 40 (Joseph interprets dreams)

1 Samuel 17 (David and Goliath)

Ruth 1-4

Law

The Old Testament regulations are primarily found from Exodus to Deuteronomy. The Old Testament law is a covenant between God and Israel that promises His protection in exchange for their obedience. Although it is important that we know the law, it does not necessarily carry the same force of command for us that it carried for ancient Israel. We are under the New Covenant. To correctly interpret and apply the law to our situation, we must remember:

1. Old Testament Law is the inspired word of God for you, not necessarily God's command for you.
2. The parts of the Old Testament law that are reinforced in the New Testament are God's command to you.
3. The Old Testament laws were never intended to cover each specific situation, but to give examples of expected and appropriate behavior. Keeping only the letter of the law results in

distorting the spirit of the law. Attempting to keep the full spirit of the law highlights our own imperfections and the need for God's grace.

Now we are going to test your knowledge of the law. Read the rules below and check True or False, if you think it is a real Old Testament law or not.

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|---|--------------------|
| 1. Do not kill. | True ___ False ___ |
| 2. Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk. | True ___ False ___ |
| 3. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. | True ___ False ___ |
| 4. Do not drink alcohol. | True ___ False ___ |

Some examples of Old Testament law are:

Exodus 20:1-17

Leviticus 19

Numbers 5:5-10

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Prophecy

The prophet's task was to declare God's Word to the people of his day. We often think that the prophet's job is to predict the future, which the prophets did. However, it was often the immediate future of Israel, and thus the past for us. Added to this difficulty is the fact that the prophets often spoke in poetry about things that were far away. Some guidelines for interpreting prophecy are:

1. Understand that most Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled within the lifetime of their original audiences.
2. Prophets generally spoke in poetry, so figurative language was used often.
3. The prophecies were given within a cultural context and a distinct history. Do not be afraid to seek help from a good commentary, Bible Handbook or other study guide if the context is difficult to understand.

Test your prophetic knowledge. Match the prophet with his words or a fact about him.

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| Ezekiel | "Let righteousness roll on like a never-failing stream!" |
| Micah | He survived the lion's den. |
| Daniel | Was not allowed to cry when his wife died. |
| Amos | He said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. |

Some examples of prophetic books are:

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Hosea

Amos

Daniel

Wisdom

The Bible's wisdom literature can be found in several places, mainly in the books of Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs. Wisdom is "the discipline of applying truth to your life in light of experience." For this reason, much of the wisdom literature focuses on "worldly" things and misunderstanding this type of literature could lead to a materialistic

perspective. Also, figurative language is often used in wisdom literature, occasionally making interpretation difficult. Here are some guidelines for proper interpretation:

1. Proverbs are poetic guidelines for good behavior, not legal guarantees from God.
2. Wisdom literature (especially Ecclesiastes and Job) must be understood in its entirety, not taking individual verses out of context.

How wise are you? Circle each phrase below that is a real proverb from the Bible.

“The Lord helps those who help themselves.”

“It is better to live in the corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife.”

“A stitch in time saves nine.”

“A cheerful heart is good medicine.”

Some examples of wisdom literature are:

Proverbs

Job

Ecclesiastes

Psalm 37

Psalm

The psalms are an interesting type of Biblical literature. They are really songs of worship to God. They were written in poetic form and were probably originally put to music – the “Song Book” of the Old Testament. Some good guidelines to follow when studying the Psalms are:

1. The Psalms use a lot of poetic language. Be careful about reading them literally.
2. The intent of the Psalms is to evoke an emotional response rather than a logical discussion.
3. Like the proverbs, the psalms should not be understood as God’s legal guarantees, but to express ourselves to Him and to meditate on His ways.

There are many different types of psalms. Let’s see if you can match a psalm to the category to which it belongs:

1. Psalm 39

A. History of Salvation

2. Psalm 75

B. Hymn of Praise

3. Psalm 104

C. Lament

4. Psalm 78

D. Thanksgiving

Scripture to memorize:

The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Psalm 119:130