

Narrative Bible Teaching - #3

Let's do it!

The books of the Bible are written by many different authors over many centuries. Still, they are connected in several ways. They are connected by . . .

History

The book of Genesis starts with a history of the world (Creation, Fall, Flood) and then follows the history of the patriarchs and then the people of Israel. Their 40 year journey leads them to conquer the land of Canaan and then establish the kingdom of Israel. This kingdom is split by civil war and then the northern kingdom is conquered by Assyria. The southern kingdom lasts a little longer before becoming prisoners of war in Babylon for 70 years before returning to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. The history is picked up again with a focus on the life of Jesus and then of the apostles.

Storyline

The storyline within the history follows certain main characters including Abraham and his family, then Moses and the Israelites, then Jesus and his apostles.

Themes

The themes within the storyline such as the kingdom and redemption recur throughout all the books. The focus on these recurring themes by the authors is clearly intentional and intended to communicate key ideas as the narrative unfolds.

Family line

Genealogies are repeated throughout the storyline. The descendants of Abraham and then of David are intended to look ahead to a descendant who will fulfill the promises made to these two men. It is no accident that the New Testament begins this same way outing the connection of Jesus' family line to this embedded genealogy.

There are a few strategies to include elements of this connected storyline concept into the understanding of those you teach.

Chronological Bible Storying

This can be done in one sitting. This is effective but difficult to accomplish. Telling one story per week (or any other time period) in order is a great strategy for a group. Starting with a review of where you have been and then foreshadowing the next week's story keeps the connected nature of the stories in mind.

Embedding and Connecting

Bible lessons not done chronologically can still bring in the idea that each story is part of a larger connected storyline. The first strategy is to embed the story into its larger context. Set the story up as to its immediate historical context as well as its place in the larger storyline of Scripture before relating the story. The second strategy works best in the Exploration part of the lesson. This is to look for connections that the story has with stories from earlier or later in the storyline. Once you start looking for them, you find they are all over the place. There is no need to force a connection that is not there, however.

It is this intentional connection of the stories that sets the Scriptures apart from other literature and unifies the books of the Bible.