

# *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*

## Lesson 5: The Old Testament Narratives – Their Proper Use

### *Introduction*

So far we've covered most of the New Testament with Epistles and now we will cover most of the Old Testament with Narratives. These are some of the easier books to understand if you use some of the rules we will discuss in this lesson.

### *All About Narratives*

#### Biblical Narrative –

**Which Old Testament books are Narratives?**

#### **The Three Levels of Narratives**

Top Level (Redemptive History) –

Middle Level (Israel's History) –

Bottom Level –

**Each narrative is best understood when it is understood in the context of Redemptive History and Israel's History!**

### *Principles for Interpreting Narratives*

1. All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given. However, God gives us what is necessary to know.
2. Old Testament narratives usually do not teach doctrine directly but illustrate a doctrine or doctrines taught elsewhere in Scripture.
3. They are not written to answer all our theological questions. They each deal with specific issues in a limited way.
4. Narratives teach either by clearly stating the point or by clearly implying something without actually stating it.
5. Narratives record what happened – not necessarily what should have happened or what should happen every time.
  - a. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Many times, they are meant to show us what shouldn't happen and the result of sin.
  - b. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what has happened was good or bad. We should figure that out from other Scriptures.
6. God is always the hero of every story!

**Just because a narrative's teaching is not clearly stated, it doesn't mean that it is a secret. Make sure you pay close attention to what a narrative tells you (not what it doesn't) and prayerfully discern the implied message.**

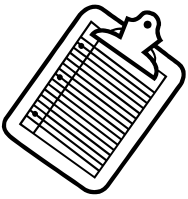
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### *Common Mistakes Made when Interpreting Narratives*

1. Allegorizing – Instead of seeing what the passage clearly says, some see the text as reflecting another meaning that is not at all implied.
2. Decontextualizing – Taken small portions of the narrative out of its context to make up new meanings that don't fit with the whole.
3. False Combination – This approach combines elements from here and there in a passage and makes a point out of the combination.
4. Redefinition – When people don't like what the passage clearly states, they try to redefine it to mean something else.
5. Using Outside Books – Some groups (like Mormons or other cults) use books beside the Bible to interpret Old Testament narratives.
6. Moralizing – Some people try to find a moral behind every story, even when there isn't one. Some things are just historical details meant to educate us about what was happening.
7. Personalizing – This person pretends that every part of Scripture in some way applies to them right now rather than looking at the passage in context.

### *Assignments:*



- Read the account of David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1 through 12:25)

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### Individual Assignment *Studying & Presenting an Old Testament Narrative*

Read the Old Testament Narrative that you are assigned and be prepared to present the following information and answer questions:

- 1) What is the bottom level (tell us what happened in the narrative)?
  - a) Is there background information that we need to know to understand this narrative?
  - b) Who are the main characters and what do we learn about them?
  - c) What spiritual lessons are taught in the narrative?
    - i) If spiritual lessons are taught in this narrative, what other Scriptures confirm this teaching?
  - d) Who is the hero of the story?
- 2) What is the middle level (How does this narrative fit into Israel's history)? When Israelites look back at their history, what was accomplished by this event and how did it affect them?
- 3) What is the top level (How does this narrative fit into redemptive history)? The narrative could be either something that took place which prophesies about Christ and His work or allows things to happen which will bring us to Christ.
- 4) Did you enjoy this assignment? What lessons did you learn from it? Do you feel that this was a good way to learn to use the concepts taught in class?