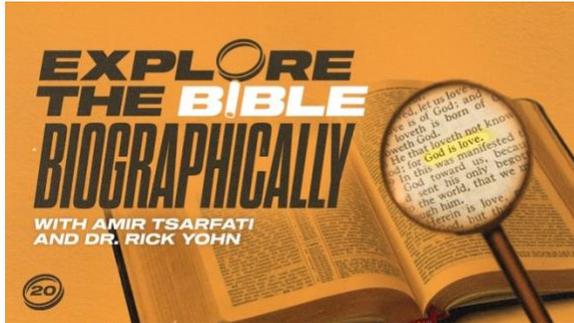




Amir Tsarfati
with Dr. Rick Yohn
Studying the Bible Biographically

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8FRmZCspdc>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone, I'm Amir Tsarfati and welcome back to one of my favorite online programs, *Explore the Bible* with Dr. Rick Yohn. Shalom, Dr. Rick Yohn, how are you, my friend?

We have a very, very exciting program today. We flipped the page and we are moving to a new phase and chapter in what we're going to touch on. But before we do that, would you do us the honor and start with a prayer?

RICK: I'd love to. Lord God, we are so excited once again to get into Your Word. And we ask that Your Holy Spirit instruct us that He is the one who will open our eyes to see and give us that understanding that only You can give. I pray, Father, that You will be honored in our discussion and we just thank You for what You are going to accomplish in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

AMIR: Amen, amen. So, Shalom again, everyone. Dr. Rick and I are here for another episode of *Explore the Bible*. You know, Rick, we've been exploring the interpretation of the Bible literally, grammatically, and historically. And as I suggested a few minutes ago, we are flipping the page to a new thing, a new chapter. And after we did it grammatically and literally and historically, what is next? How are we going to explore the Bible next?

RICK: Well, we're going to try to, as we look at the Scriptures, look at them biographically. We're going to look at people's...

AMIR: Again, biographically.

RICK: Biographical. You think of “bios,” the Greek words, two Greek words, *bios* meaning life or living and *graphē* meaning writing. So, it is a writing about an individual’s life. And we often learn more from people than we do from ideas. And so, I want us to get into the Scriptures to see how God changes an individual’s life. And in this case, we’re going to see a major change in this person’s life.

AMIR: I see. So, biographically, wow, that’s the first time for me to hear of this type of interpretation. But where do we start from? I mean, do we have the same who, why, when, where, and what? Is it the same thing as we did before?

RICK: The same questions, but we’re going to do them in a different way. It’s going to be: Who is it that we’re going to study? Why are we going to study that individual? When did that person live? Where did that person live? And then, what about him? What is the story about him? So, that’s a process I want us to take today.

AMIR: All right, well, in that case, we always take a short—Yeah, go ahead.

RICK: I just want to say to our viewers, I just want to encourage you to get pencil and paper out because I have some things I want you to write down as we go along. So, get your pencil and your paper and open your Bibles, and we’re going to look at somebody that—I think you’re going to be surprised when you find out who it is and what he has accomplished and what his life was like before he accomplished anything.

AMIR: Yeah, all right, well, in that case, who are we going to study today, biographically?

RICK: We’re going to study a man by the name of John.

AMIR: Oh, okay. All right, I mean, I can think of a few of them, but a man by the name of John, okay. So, do you want to tell us which John or should we discover that as we go?

RICK: We will find out which John as we go along because I want our viewers to discover with us, who is this man called John, and what is his life like?

AMIR: I understand. So, basically, correct me if I'm wrong, instead of reading a portion and analyzing it historically, grammatically, and also literally, we're offering today a new way to interpret the Bible, where we are actually directly delving into a *person* rather than a specific book, necessarily. And as we... [RICK: Right] I get it. So, well... perfect. Are we are going to let the viewers discover by themselves who that John is?

RICK: [Laughter] They're going to discover as we go along.

AMIR: All right, that should be very, very interesting. So, now that we know the who, or at least we know what his or what one of his names is, now we're probably going to look at the why, am I right?

RICK: Correct. It was Dr. Howard G. Hendricks at Dallas Seminary who said, "Everyone needs a Paul and a Barnabas and a Timothy in their lives." What did he mean by that? Well, the Apostle Paul was a teacher of the Word. And then Barnabas was an encourager of individuals. And Timothy was one who needed to be taught and one who needed to be encouraged. As I look back on my own life, I've experienced all three of these, and I've become all three of these. I had many wonderful Pauls in my life when I went to Philadelphia College of Bible and Dallas Theological Seminary, men like Dr. John Walvoord, and Dr. Charles Ryrie, men who taught me the Word of God. And then Dr. Howard Hendricks himself is the one who taught me how to get into the Bible for myself. So, I needed Apostle Pauls in my life. But I also had a lot of Barnabas' in my life. Even when I was 18 years old, there were four men who built into my life. They saw something in me that I did not see. And they encouraged me and got me into the Scriptures and would meet with me and invite me to go different places with them. In fact, the first time I ever heard Billy Graham,

one of these Barnabas's has called me up one day and said, "Hey, Billy Graham is going to be down there in New Jersey. Do you want to drive down there with me to hear him?" Well, that was a Barnabas who really encouraged me. And of course, I was the Timothy. I needed the Paul and the Barnabas in my life. And this individual that we're going to study needed both a Paul and a Barnabas. And then later in his life, he became a Paul and a Barnabas in the lives of others. So that's why I want us to look at this man called John.

AMIR: I see. Well, in that case, I'm actually very intrigued and very interested in this individual. So now that we know who and why. I guess the when, correct me if I'm wrong, is the first century Jerusalem. Am I right?

RICK: It is the first century. And when we asked the question, "Where?" Well, we have to go to the book of Acts. And I want to encourage our viewers to turn with us to the book of Acts chapter 11. Now, recall that before chapter 11 is chapter 10, and that's when Peter was there at the house down in Joppa of the tanner. And he gets this vision of a large sheet coming down and a voice saying, "Kill and eat." And Peter, immediately he says, "Lord, I only eat kosher food. I don't eat that stuff." And this went on three times. And Peter had no idea what that was about. And pretty soon there was a knock on the door. And there were men from up in Caesarea who were working for a centurion by the name of Cornelius. And they were at the door knocking, asking for Peter. And Peter realizes that perhaps this was of the Lord and he goes up to Caesarea and goes into this Gentile house, which he never would have done before. And that's where we have the Gentile Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles as well as upon the Jews.

And then after that happened, we find Peter there in Jerusalem trying to explain to his cohorts there why he went to the house of the Gentiles, that the Holy Spirit was working in their

lives also. And so if we look at Chapter 11, we are going to begin to get introduced to this man, John. In verse 19, why don't you read verses 19 to 25 for us?

AMIR: Yes. [Acts 11:19–27] **“¹⁹ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks as well, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were added to the Lord. ²⁵ And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. ²⁷ Now at this time,...”** [NASB] Okay, that's it?

RICK: That's it. So now we are introduced to a man by the name of Barnabas. He was not only a teacher, but he was a great encourager. He was the one who introduced Saul to those in Jerusalem who were disciples. They were fearful of Saul, but Barnabas went out of his way and introduced Saul to those in Jerusalem. And here we find Barnabas coming to Antioch and starting to minister there in Antioch. But because God was doing such a great work in Antioch, he went out there to find Saul and brought him to Antioch and they spent a whole year in Antioch ministering to the people. And now if you look at [Acts] chapter 12 it says, **“¹ Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother**

of John with the sword. ³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.” Now down in verse 5, “⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.” Now we’re about to be introduced to this John, but not until Peter is thrown in prison. And as he is thrown in prison, it was just amazing what happened when he was there in prison. If you look in verse 7, “⁷ Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, ‘Arise quickly!’ And his chains fell off his hands. ⁸ Then the angel said to him, ‘Gird yourself and tie on your sandals’; and so he did. And he said to him, ‘Put on your garment and follow me.’ ⁹ So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ And when Peter had come to himself, he said, ‘Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.’” So now Peter’s out there, he is released, but where can he go? Well, he knew that there were people in one home that were praying for him.

AMIR: Oh yeah. That was a funny scene. I always think about the fact that the lady that opened the door was so excited that she forgot to let him in. [Laughter]

RICK: And that’s exactly what happened. But... “¹² So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.” And of course, Peter’s out there knocking on the door, and we have this Rhoda who comes to answer the door, but she does the answer and she’s just so excited and

she runs back and tells everyone else. And here they are, I find so much like us, they are praying and praying, “Oh Lord, release Peter, oh Lord, release Peter.” And the Lord releases Peter and he’s knocking on the door and they say, “No, that can’t be Peter. We’re praying for Peter to be released. That can’t be Peter over there.”

AMIR: And it sure was.

RICK: How interesting it is, we pray for something and God answers and then we wonder, is this really God’s answer to prayer? Well, it was God’s answer to prayer. So now we’ve been introduced to Saul, who is the Apostle Paul. We’ve been introduced to Barnabas, and now we’ve been introduced to this John.

AMIR: Yes.

RICK: And we find that now that John is hooked up with Barnabas and Saul, we are told in verse 25 that **“²⁵ ...Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.”** And then we find that Mark goes with them on this first missionary journey. And as he is traveling with them, you look at Acts 13 now and verse 13, it says, **“¹³ Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.”** So here this young John, who was in the house praying for Peter’s release, goes on this first missionary journey with Barnabas and Saul and he no sooner gets to Pamphylia that he decides, “I’m going home to momma. This, I don’t, it’s just beyond me.” And he runs home. So the next time we run into John is when we have the results of what he did by running home.

AMIR: Yeah, and I’m just thinking—So Pamphylia, he actually crossed from Cyprus to Turkey of today and then decided to go back.

RICK: Right. And when we get to chapter 15, we find that there’s a...

AMIR: ...I would have probably run back as well. No, never mind. Go ahead. [Laughter]

RICK: Well, it's one of those opportunities that you have that you are excited about and you get on the ship and what you were expecting didn't turn out the way you thought it was going to be. And it just became too much for you at that time, at that stage of your life. And you end up running back home. Well, when somebody does that, what are the results? Well, look at chapter 15 because it's time now where...

AMIR: ...That's the church council in Jerusalem.

RICK: Right. You have this church council and they decide: This is what we should do for Gentiles. Not tell them that they have to be circumcised because they were those who were preaching that, "Yeah, you need to receive Christ, but you also need to be circumcised." And so God used that situation to get them from Antioch up to Jerusalem. And after they made the decision as to what the Gentiles should do, we find in chapter 15 that there was a division between Paul and Barnabas. Why don't you read verses 36 to the end there in chapter 15.

AMIR: Yes, 36 to the end, **"³⁶ After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.'** ³⁷ **Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸ But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰ But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."** [NASB95]
Wow! That's... I mean, think about that, he held some grudges, am I right?

RICK: Yeah, we see this split here, but we see the personality of Barnabas coming out. Barnabas actually was the cousin of John, and he saw that John had something in him that the Apostle Paul didn't see. The Apostle Paul was looking at the mission. He was driven by the Holy Spirit that "We have to get out there again. We have to start, you know, preach the gospel beyond where we have preached the gospel." So his focus was on mission, whereas the focus of Barnabas was on an individual. Now, the question is, who was right and who was wrong? Well, in reality, both of them were right. They just were looking at two different things that was driving them, basically by their own personalities. The Apostle Paul, when he came to Christ, he was on a mission, and that is to get the gospel out there to as many people as possible. And he wanted people with him who were going to stay with him and move forward with the gospel. Whereas Barnabas, because of his—by the way, the word Barnabas means "son of encouragement." And he was a son of encouragement. He saw something in young John that Paul did not see, because Paul wasn't looking at the individual. He was looking at the world.

And I think today that's why we have so many denominations, because men of God who love the Lord and love one another are going to have disagreements as to how do you do this. And there are those who are going to focus on the mission of what they feel God's called them to, and others are going to say, "Wait a minute. We have these people who really need someone to come alongside of them, who have so much potential." You know, in my own life, I found that when I was in high school, I had no idea how to study. I wasn't really interested in studying. I was interested in gymnastics. I was interested in running. I was interested in all kinds of physical things, but not mental things. And my homeroom teacher one day told me to stand up and give me an answer to whatever question he had. And I had no idea what he was talking about, because I wasn't paying any attention. And he said, "Yohn, you'll never amount to anything. Sit down." And then

I had another situation. Still, when I was in high school, I was going to go from high school to Franklin Marshall College there in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And my buddy happened to be a photographer for the school newspaper. And he told me one day, he says, “Hey, Rick, why don’t you go out with me to Franklin Marshall College, because I’m supposed to take photos of those students from McCaskey who are going to go to Franklin Marshall.” Well, I was real excited about that. But the next day, he came back and he said, “Uh, it’s no use, you aren’t going with me. In fact, you’re not allowed to go with me because the person who’s in charge of this whole school newspaper told me that you’re not going to graduate from high school.” So, I did not have any [garbled word] at that time. I was just told, “Man, you have nothing to add.” And God had other plans. But yeah, I was a young John. I was a man who had no direction in my life, didn’t know where I was going. But God brought around me some Barnabas’s to get me to where I need to be.

AMIR: Yeah, so how did John become a Paul and Barnabas to other people?

RICK: That’s a great question, Amir. When you think of it, first of all, John was a Timothy.

AMIR: That’s why I’m asking this.

RICK: He wasn’t a great Timothy, but he eventually did really learn. But as we look at the Scriptures, he became a Barnabas to others. In fact, you will find he became a Barnabas to Saul himself, to the Apostle Paul. Look at some passages of Scripture, a couple I have in mind,

Colossians 4:10 Why don’t you read that?

AMIR: Yeah, all right. So, **“¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas’ cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him;)”** [NASB95]. So I guess they had better relationship then than before.

RICK: They did. But did you know how the Apostle Paul addressed John? He didn’t use the name of him then.

AMIR: Um-hum, He says Mark.

RICK: Yeah, this man's name was John Mark. But now, like with Saul, who became Paul, this John Mark no longer was John Mark. He was Mark.

AMIR: So is this the Mark that wrote the Gospel?

RICK: That's exactly right.

AMIR: Wow!

RICK: You wonder how he became like a Paul? He wrote the Gospel of Mark.

AMIR: There you go.

RICK: And he is teaching us today as we read the gospel of Mark, he is teaching us the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

AMIR: Amazing. And is there anything beyond what the Bible tells us that we know about, Mark?

RICK: Yes, we've been told—And I've done a lot of research on this to make sure that what I'm telling you is...

AMIR: ...Be careful, please be careful.

RICK: So I am speaking, this is not from the Scriptures, but we are told in history that this Mark then not only wrote the Gospel of Mark, but he also went to Egypt, and he started preaching the gospel in Egypt. In fact, he ended up becoming the founder of the Coptic church in Egypt. And many people came to Christ and of course the Coptic church really grew under his ministry. But like the other apostles, he too was martyred by people there in Egypt who did not want to hear the good news. And so that's what we find with this man's...

AMIR: ...So where do we get that information from? I mean, because there's a lot of people in India, China, whatever, they all saw an apostle and he's the founder of the church there. So how do we know that this—I mean, is there any writing somewhere else that we can point at? Because

you know, you have—Think about it, you have 40 years of experience in ministry, in studying, in teaching. But what about the layperson who doesn't have any degree, and he wants to know these things? How will he find them?

RICK: Well, that's a great question. When I got out of seminary—I wish I had it with me—I had my Bible and I had *Strong's Concordance*. That was it. So when I wanted to find information, I had this huge concordance.

AMIR: So, you didn't have AI? No AI during your time?

RICK: There was no nothing. And you just had to look up with your *Strong's Concordance* or with commentaries. And you can find commentaries. There's blueletterbible.org. They have commentaries, they have so much information. And then there's also biblehub.com.

AMIR: So Blue Letter Bible and Bible Hub, both of them are .com?

RICK: No, blueletterbible.org.

AMIR: Okay.

RICK: And then BibleHub.com.

AMIR: Now, we're going to put it right now in the lower third of the screen. So you can see and go and check those sites. And these are very useful ones. And I'm sure that...

RICK: ...And they're free.

AMIR: And they're free, exactly.

RICK: They're free, I can't believe how much information is available now.

AMIR: You're right. You're right. So as we close our program, and we're going to continue in the next few weeks with that theme of the interpreting biographically, what lessons do you think we can learn from the life of John Mark? I mean, we've reached the "what" now.

RICK: Yes, one of the lessons that we can learn is not to allow what people say about you to get you so discouraged that you don't pursue the direction the Lord wants you to go. I mean, when I was in high school, I could have said, "Well, everybody thinks I'm a failure. I guess I'm a failure." And I would probably have just never even gone to college, certainly never gone to seminary. And I'm so glad I didn't listen to what they said.

AMIR: I'm glad also.

RICK: The other thing I would say, ask yourself, "Am I a Paul to anybody?" Well, you should be a Paul to your children. You should be a Paul to some of your friends who really need to be taught the Word of God. Secondly, ask yourself, "Am I a Barnabas to anybody? Am I an encourager?" One of the things I pray for every day when I wake up, I say, "Lord, allow me to be a Barnabas to somebody. I want to encourage people today." There are people who are fighting different problems in their life, and they need someone who will come along and cheer them up, probably share Christ with them, or just let them know that they have a friend. And then thirdly, "Who am I a Timothy to, or am I making any Timothys? Am I spending time building into the lives of young people or some friends who really need to know something about the Scriptures? Am I a Timothy to somebody, or am I a Timothy learning the Word of God? Am I not only listening to pastors and that, but am I in the Word of God for myself?" Because we should—I'm still a Timothy. I'm so amazed at what I learn every day. And I find it so much that I did not even see before. I mean, even this—what we're talking about today, John Mark, there are a lot of things I discovered just as I was preparing this. And day after day, I am learning more and more, seeing things that I had not seen in the past. And when my son Steve and I get together every Tuesday morning for breakfast, I keep on sharing things that I've discovered, and he shares with me things

that he has discovered. And we've taught, we've preached, but now the Lord has opened our eyes to something else. So, we should always be a Timothy.

AMIR: Yeah, that's beautiful. I can also say about myself that, you know, oftentimes when I travel and teach, I mean, there is the Paul of, I guess, a component to it. But then during those conferences, obviously I'm not the only speaker, I get a chance to sit and become the Timothy. And in between services, you get to see the people, and then you can become a Barnabas to them also. So in one speaking tour, you can be all three, even in just one conference. So I get to experience that also.

Dr. Rick, thank you for an amazing *Explore the Bible* program today about... That's the first of few that we're going to explore the Bible and the interpretation biographically. And next time, we're going to try and take a case study of an Old Testament figure. So I'll keep you all in suspense, until we get to see you in a few weeks. Until then, thank you, Dr. Rick. I want to thank everyone for joining us today. Watch, like, comment, and share. And if you can, go to our website and find the Explore the Bible tag there. And you can actually send Dr. Rick a question regarding what you've heard today in this program. Thank you again. God bless you and Shalom.

* Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

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