

# Epistles Inductive Overview Assignment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The epistles are letters written by or under the direction of apostles to Christian churches meeting in cities and towns all over the Roman Empire. Most epistles were written to address specific issues that arose in these churches. By sifting through the details of an epistle, we can draw important conclusions about the letter as a whole:

- the flow of thought in the book
- the historical setting—the life situation of the author and his audience
- the general theme(s) of the letter
- the reason why the letter was written

In this assignment, you will use the inductive study method to produce an overview of Philemon and Titus. Armed with broad understanding of both books, you will better understand individual passages in each letter.

You should learn this method well enough to teach someone else how to do it. Learning how to conduct a thorough inductive overview of an epistle is essential for developing sound teachings. Knowledge gained through inductive study will give you depth and credibility as a speaker and help to ensure that your interpretation is correct.

**1. Paragraph titles:** Read Philemon all the way through and write down titles for each paragraph. This will reveal the general thought development of the letter. Titles should meet the following requirements:

- Titles should be short phrases, not long sentences. If your titles are too long, it will be difficult to discern the overall flow of thought in the book. We've provided a few examples in *italics*.
- Titles should cover most of the content in the paragraph.
- Use the paragraph divisions we have provided.

vs. 1-3: *Greeting*

vs. 4-7:

vs. 8-16:

vs. 17-20: *Paul will do anything to restore Onesimus*

v. 21:

vs. 22-24:

v. 25:

**2. Information about the author, audience, and key 3rd parties:** In the book of Philemon, the **author** is Paul. The **audience** is the person or group the author is writing to—in this case, Philemon. **Key third parties** are *people* (not God, angels, or Satan) other than the audience that the author mentions more than once in his letter. Third parties are often false teachers or individuals affecting the church in some way. In this letter, **Onesimus** is the key third party.

Reread the verses in each column. Note what each verse says about the person named at the top of the column. If you're not sure what to write, leave it blank. If you have a hunch but aren't sure, write it down anyhow and mark your observation with an asterisk. **Be thorough—every bit of information matters.** Example observations have been provided.

Author: Paul	Audience: Philemon	3rd Party: Onesimus
v. 1 – <i>Paul is a prisoner and with Timothy.</i>	v. 1 –	
v. 4 –	v. 2 –	
v. 7 –	v. 5,7 – <i>Philemon is faithful to Christ and loving to Christians</i>	
v. 8 –		
v. 9 –		
v. 10 –		v. 10 –
v. 11 –	v. 11 – <i>Philemon was dissatisfied with Onesimus' performance.</i>	v. 11 –
v. 12 – <i>Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon.</i>		v. 12 –
v. 13 –		v. 13 – <i>Onesimus has ministered to Paul.</i>
v. 14 –	v. 14 –	v. 15 –
	v. 16 –	v. 16 –
v. 17 –	v. 17 –	
	v. 18 –	v. 18 – <i>Onesimus may have wronged Philemon by stealing from him.*</i>
v. 19 –	v. 19 –	
	v. 21 –	
v. 22 –	v. 22 – <i>Philemon has the means to offer lodging to Paul.</i>	
v. 23 –		

**Summary of the historical situation:** Now summarize your observations about Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus in one paragraph. Model your summaries after the one we've provided about Paul.

Paul	Philemon	Onesimus
<p><i>Paul is a Christian leader, now imprisoned for his faith in Christ. While imprisoned, he has converted Onesimus, who is a slave owned by Philemon, a fellow Christian worker who Paul knows and respects. He has sent Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter, hoping that Philemon will forgive Onesimus and be reconciled to him. Though imprisoned, Paul has financial means. He hopes to be released soon and visit Philemon.</i></p>		

**3. What are the major themes that Paul is addressing in Philemon?** Look closely at your paragraph titles, skim the letter again, and review your observations. Do you see any repeated ideas, words, and themes?

What do vs. 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21 reveal about the way Paul interacts with Philemon?

How has Onesimus' life change as a result of being around Paul? See v. 11, 13, 15, 16.

Do you see any other broad themes in this letter? If so, what are they?

**4. Why did Paul write the letter?** Survey all of the information you've gathered. What was Paul's CHIEF reason for writing?

## Titus

Now use the same method to write an overview of the book of Titus.

**1. Paragraph titles:** Read Titus all the way through and write down titles for each paragraph.

**1:1-4**

**1:5-9**

**1:10-16**

**2:1-15**

**3:1-11**

**3:12-15**

**2. Information about the author, audience, and key 3rd parties:** Paul (author) wrote this letter to Titus (audience). Key third parties are the **people in the churches on Crete** and the **false teachers** that were plaguing these churches. Gather information from the verses listed below about the person or group listed at the top of each column.

Author: Paul	Audience: Titus	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party #1: Cretan churches	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party #2: False teachers
<p><b>1:1 –</b></p> <p><b>1:3 –</b></p> <p><b>1:4 –</b> <i>Paul has real affection for Titus.</i></p> <p><b>1:5 –</b></p> <p><b>1:13 –</b></p>	<p><b>1:4 –</b></p> <p><b>1:5 –</b> <i>Titus was left in Crete to set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city.</i></p>	<p><b>1:5 –</b></p>	<p><b>1:10 –</b></p> <p><b>1:11 –</b> <i>They upset whole families, teaching things they should not teach.</i></p> <p><b>1:13 –</b></p> <p><b>1:14 –</b></p> <p><b>1:15 –</b></p>



**Paul –**

**Titus –**

**The false teachers –**

**3. Major themes:** What theme does each cluster of verses touch on?

1:5; 1:10,11; 2:5,9,15; 3:1 –

1:1,2,9-11; 2:1,7b,8,15; 3:8 –

What other themes did you see in the book of Titus?

**4. What would you say was Paul's chief reason for writing this letter?**