

Christian Principles
Unit 3 Week 6
Inductive Study: Epistles

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Overview

1. Paragraph titles: Read the book all the way through, writing down titles for each paragraph.

This reveals the general thought development of the book. Titles should meet the following requirements:

- The titles should be short. No sentences are allowed. A phrase of a few words is the maximum length. This will force us to get the main idea clearly fixed in our minds.
- The titles should cover all of the significant content in the paragraph. If there is subject matter that is not covered in your title, you need revision.
- Decide in advance how you will determine where the paragraph divisions belong. If studying with a study group, it is probably best to stay with the existing paragraphs. However, if convenient, it is often correct to divide the paragraphs in a different location than those used in any particular version. Feel free to discuss where the divisions should be, and why. (Remember that they are not inspired, and are different from one version to another).

2. Identity and situation of the author, audience, and 3rd parties: Compile all the references to the author, audience and key 3rd parties. This is usually done by drawing three columns on a sheet of paper-- one for the author, one for the audience, and one for others. The data should be referenced with the chapter and verse, and marked with an asterisk if the insight is implied rather than directly stated. The implied data are less conclusive in reconstructing the historical situation. Once all the data is gathered, write a one paragraph summary of the historical situation of the author, audience and any third parties.

3. Major themes: Review your paragraph titles and note repeated ideas, words, and themes. What are the major issues/themes that the author is addressing?

4. Why was the letter written? Record your conclusions about the author's reason(s) for writing the book.

Paragraph Study

1. Structure (skeleton): Clarify the author's thought development or argument.

a. Identify the main point of the paragraph

Hints:

- Imperatives
- Connective words such as: thus, so, therefore, then...
- Overarching, controlling idea
- Independent clause expressing a complete thought
- Note: Sometimes more than one main point

- b. Identify the supporting points – Supporting points are the bases for the main claim and explain **how** and **why** the main point is true or should be acted upon. List supporting points as individual summary phrases. Note the verse number where each supporting point is located.

Hints:

- Indicative statements
- Connective words: since, because, if, for...
- Dependent clauses
- Illustrations or examples

- c. Literary/theological context – Identify the main point of the paragraph before and after. How does your paragraph fit into the argument of this section of the book?

2. Theology (*muscle*): Understand the *content* of the paragraph.

- a. Identify and define unfamiliar, historically significant, and key words; note use of Old Testament passages.

- b. State theological meaning of claim and supporting points, including how the theology of supporting points relate to the main claim. For example, what does this passage teach about God, man, sin, salvation, the church, ministry, etc.

- c. What other passages might bear on your interpretation? Consider passages that address the main point of the paragraph.

3. Application (*skin*): Understand *what to do* based on the meaning of the paragraph.

- a. How is the argument of the paragraph intended to affect the original audience in terms of actions, attitudes, convictions? Application should center on the main point, not on supporting points.

- b. How is the argument of this passage relevant to me/my group/our culture?

Practice identifying main and supporting points

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest." - Mark Twain

Main point:

Supporting points:

"7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near." - James 5:7-8

Main point:

Supporting points:

"2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak." - Col. 4:2-4

Main point:

Supporting points:

"5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." – 2 Tim 1:5-7

Main point:

Supporting points:

Assignment: Do a paragraph study on Titus 1:10-16. This assignment must be turned in at the beginning of the lecture next week in order to pass the course.

Memory Verses: None this week.