

Session Four

COLOR SCHEMES AND PARAGRAPH THEMES

You are in the process of putting your Biblical "jigsaw puzzle" together. You have found the corner pieces (survey readings) and the border or straight-edged pieces (horizontal chart). You have a framework within which you can work with a measure of confidence (manuscript survey). You have also turned all of your many pieces upright, and in the process you are making multiple observations. As a result you are beginning to understand the intent of the author, which means you are beginning to engage the mind (and heart) of God as given through this Scripture text.

Now you want to complete the more difficult, inner portions of the puzzle. For a real puzzle you would start by separating the various dominant colors from one another. Each color will suggest a general sub-theme that will make up part of the finished picture.

Groups of paragraphs in the Biblical text will provide the sub-themes that will make up the final picture for a section, and then sections connect to form the final message of the book being studied. A paragraph is an important unit of study, for each paragraph will convey one central thought; a thought added to thought builds to form a message.

Paragraph divisions in our various translations are not inspired. That is one reason Peter exhorts us to "rightly divide the Word of truth." While not inspired, paragraphs are the key to discovering the original author's intent. This is a vital part of Biblical study.



Be diligent to
present yourself
approved to God
as a workman
who does not need
to be ashamed,
accurately handling
the word of truth.
2 TIMOTHY 2:15 NASB

An Example

Colossians 1:9-14 (NIV)

⁹For this reason,
since the day we heard about you,
we have not stopped praying for you.

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,

¹⁰so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord
and please him in every way:

bearing fruit in every good work,

growing in the knowledge of God,

¹¹being strengthened with all power

according to his glorious might

so that you may have great endurance and patience,

¹²and giving joyful thanks to the Father,

who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy
people in the kingdom of light.

¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Clause Layout

The Purpose: to visually show every clause in a paragraph and capture the author's flow of thought.

Step 1:

Copy and paste an entire paragraph of Scripture into a word processor.

Step 2:

Identify every verb in the paragraph by boxing or highlighting.

Step 3:

Box or highlight every transition word that shows how one clause relates to another.

Step 4:

Use indenting to show primary and secondary clauses. Primary clauses go all the way to the left. Secondary clauses are indented one level to the right from the clause they are under.

The paragraph is a unit of thought. A paragraph has one and only one central subject!

“Parts have no meaning apart from the whole.”

—GRANT OSBORNE
The Hermeneutical Spiral

An Example

Colossians 1:9-14

1. The reason for Paul's prayer is given in the previous paragraph (9a).
2. The time of Paul's prayer goes back to when he heard about the Colossians (9b).
3. Paul has not ceased praying for the Colossians (9c).
4. The content of Paul's request is that the Colossians know God's will (9d).
5. The purpose of knowing God's will is to live a life worthy of God (10a).
6. The purpose of knowing God's will is to live a life pleasing to God (10b).
7. A worthy and pleasing life includes good works (10c).
8. A worthy and pleasing life includes growth in knowledge of God (10d).
9. A worthy and pleasing life includes being strengthened by God (11a).
10. The standard of our being strengthened is God's strength (11b).
11. The purpose of our being strengthened is our endurance and patience (11c).
12. A worthy and pleasing life includes giving joyful thanks to the Father (12a).
13. The Father has qualified us to enjoy the blessings of His family (12b).
14. The way God qualified us was by rescuing us out of a terrible situation (13a).
15. The way God qualified us was by bringing us under His Son's rule (13b).
16. His Son has given us redemption and forgiveness (14).

Clause Summary

The Purpose: to summarize every idea in your own words.

Step 1:

Start a numbered list.

Step 2:

Write a sentence summarizing the content of every clause in your clause layout.

Step 3:

Pay special attention to transition words and verbs to write your summaries.

Step 4:

Let transition word meanings be present in your summary. If a clause begins with “because,” your summary should probably begin with something like “the reason for...”

Step 5:

Put verse numbers after your summaries so you can track your work.

The process of the grammatical layout “consists of rewriting the given text in such form that the grammatical components of the paragraph are clearly discernible.”

—M. TENNEY
Galatians, 166

An Example

Colossians 1:9-14

Paul has faithfully prayed for the Colossians since first hearing about them.

1. The reason for Paul's prayer is given in the previous paragraph (9a).
2. The time of Paul's prayer goes back to when he heard about the Colossians (9b).
3. Paul has not ceased praying for the Colossians (9c).

Paul's prayer for the Colossians is that they know God's will so that they may live a transformed life of good works, growing knowledge, enduring strength, and joyful gratitude.

4. The content of Paul's request is that the Colossians know God's will (9d).
5. The purpose of knowing God's will is to live a life worthy of God (10a).
6. The purpose of knowing God's will is to live a life pleasing to God (10b).
7. A worthy and pleasing life includes good works (10c).
8. A worthy and pleasing life includes growth in knowledge of God (10d).
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“One cannot simply read the Bible, like other books. One must be prepared really to enquire of it.”

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The Process Takes Time

