

## NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK<sup>1</sup>

NAME: Tabudirira Bere

PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians

**Instructions:** Use this template for your investigation of either Jonah or 1 Thessalonians. Word step by step and answer each question using good observational skills. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps. This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is your personal study and the work product that you will use for the final project at the end of this course.

### STEP 1. SURVEY THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN GENERAL

1.1 Read the entire document in English in one sitting: **YES** \_\_\_\_\_ **NO** \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1.1.1 AUTHOR.

- a) What **do you observe** about the author and his circumstances from your reading of the biblical book you are investigating? (For example, is he a skilled writer? This suggests a certain kind of education. Is he concerned with his audience? How can you tell? What does he say about himself?)

Paul is the Author of First Thessalonians; we can see that it belongs to the category of letters that the academic community unanimously judges to be unquestionably Pauline. This book includes all the attributes to point to Paul as an author i.e., vocabulary, grammatically constructions and literary style. And he was writing it to the Thessalonians. Paul was a skilled writer who knew his audience well. We can see by the way he greeted his audience first and went on to acknowledge them for who they are and how they received Paul when he was with them. Paul was concerned about the Thessalonians and that why he had to write this first letter to them. Timothy had brought back the word that the church he left was thriving but there were somethings which were bothering him and wanted to address such things.

- b) What more do you learn about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing from the **secondary literature** (New Testament and Old Testament Introductions, Critical Commentaries, Critical Bible Dictionaries, etc.)?
- ✓ *Be sure to include a working bibliography of the authors you use so you can cite them properly in your final project.*

- ✓ See Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, pp. 120-134 for a working bibliography of useful secondary resources.  
(J. Scott Duvall (Author))

This book was written during Paul's second missionary journey, which lasted between AD 49 and 51. After Paul and team had initial success in Thessalonica preaching in synagogues. A lot of people converted and followed Jesus, but they were chased away by those who did not want to convert. Paul felt that his ministry was at an infant stage therefore he did not want to leave Thessalonica. We can see that he wanted to go back twice but Satan blocked him, and he decided to send Timothy to find out how the saints were doing under extraneous pressure. Timothy returned with very encouraging news that Paul decided to send the first letter.

#### 1.1.2. **RECIPIENTS:**

*Base your answers on what you see in the text itself. You should make educated guesses about the answers to these questions from **your observations**. Only **after you do your work** should you consult secondary literature.*

- a) What do **you observe** about the identity of the recipients?

The recipients of this letter were mostly non-Jews whom Paul persuaded and many God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women in Thessalonica. They turned from their idols and received the gospel despite persecution. They were persecuted because of their implicit or even explicit rejection of the claims of the imperial cult and their refusal to continue participating in the life of the city's cults and collegia.

- b) What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?

Paul and his team introduced these Thessalonians to Jesus's gospel, and they received it well and they kept running and growing in their faith even though Paul was chased away. Paul had a deep affection with the Thessalonians which began during his initial visit that why he calls them brothers and sisters. Paul and team worked day night so not to burden the church by asking for

money. The relationship was of a Pastor and his congregant who have just given their life to God, but still need some help in different ways. Even though Paul could not be with them physically he wanted to make sure that they stay focused on Jesus only. Paul tried to go back to see them, but Satan blocked him from doing so.

c) Where do the recipients live?

Thessalonians lived in Thessalonica (also Thessalonike) which was an ancient city of Macedon in northern Greece which today is the city of Thessaloniki. Made capital of the Roman province of Macedon. This city was built on a natural harbor on the Aegean Sea which gave it trade advantages in the fourth century. It was made provincial capital because it was the most pro-Roman city in Macedonia. During Paul's time it was the largest, most populous, and wealthiest city in Macedonia. Like Rome Thessalonica saw the emphasis on the deity of Christ as a threat to the deity of the Roman emperor. Those who gave their life to Jesus were persecuted by the Jews and gentiles alike. This city was a free city during Paul's ministry and not a Roman colony, as was Philippi. But it was still a center of the imperial cult, and it was naturally a site of variety of deities.

d) What historical situation occasioned this writing?

Paul, Silas and Timothy founded Thessalonian church as it was presented in Acts 16 and 17 during the second missionary journey. This church was formed after a very difficult experience at Philippi that included flogging and imprisonment.

Paul was chased away by some other Jews who did not accept the Gospel of Jesus Paul was preaching. Paul and his team were called worldwide troublemakers because they were a threat to Pax Romana (Acts 17:6-7). They were also found guilty of proclaiming a messianic king, Jesus and a new kingdom that would replace Rome.

### 1.1.3 PURPOSE:

- a) What is the author's purpose for writing (explicit and implied. Again, you are reading between the lines if not stated outright)?

Reading through the book I can conclude that Paul had several reasons in mind when he wrote 1

Thessalonians. Paul wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good

progress in their new faith but going through serious opposition and severe persecution. Both

Jews and Gentiles did not like this new religious movement because Paul was winning many of

them to Christ (Acts 17:5). He also wrote the letter to explain to some who might have upset

thinking that Paul ran away and deserted them. He also heard about misinformation which was

being spread about him and he wanted to correct that about himself and his fellow missionaries.

Paul wanted also to give additional instruction that would help the Thessalonians' spiritual

growth.

He also wanted to correct their mistaken eschatology for some thought Christ was only for those

who were still alive and those who are dead would miss the resurrection. Paul corrects them

(4:13-18).

- b) We have a celebration of the Thessalonians' faithfulness to Jesus and a challenge them to grow.

Another theme in this book is of a true loving relationship between a pastor and a congregation.

- c) Does the argument or narrative have an easily discerned outline or storyline?

Yes

**\*You need to investigate the following from research found in commentaries, dictionaries, etc. before writing your papers and projects. Their research will help you refine the initial observations you are making:**

- Who was the author, and what was his background? (If there are different views, which is the stronger position and why?)  
According to Gordon Fee Pauline authorship of this letter has been denied from time to time due to the extreme historical skepticism of F.D Baur in the mid-nineteenth century but such denial faces enormous historical challenges. Baur's does not hold water because he is not using any historical grounds in his denial but only his buying into Hegelian philosophy. Most of the scholars in the twentieth century believe that this book was written by Paul. However, there are some who believe that Silas co-authored with him, but Paul wrote majority of the letter. This position is supported by the bases of letters written later by Paul.

- When did he write, and what was happening at the time the book was written? (Often there are different views. Consider all the different views and ask yourself, how does my answer affect the interpretation?)

According to Gordon Fee he considers authorship and date as a settled matter. The date is derived from primarily on combined data from Acts 17:1-9 and the singular mention by Paul of his being left alone in Athens when they sent Timothy to the Thessalonians. Majority of scholars therefore agree that from Acts reference, where it is told that Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica by the way of Philippi where they were asked to leave the town authorities it can be conclude that the date is between 49-51 CE. The actual location of Paul when he wrote this letter is unknown. This authorship date is based on few historical data at scholar's disposal.
- What was the nature of his ministry?

Paul's ministry first was focused on preaching in Jewish Synagogue but comments to his letter to the Thessalonians suggest that his ministry took a broader compass. He worked day and night with his companions while proclaiming the gospel to the Thessalonians which offers a literal description of how the evangelization of these gentile idol worshipers took place. He preached in synagogues on sabbath days, but on the other six days of the week Paul and his friends turned their leather shop into an arena for religious dialogue offering their Christianity testimony to clients, customers, colleagues, and curious passersby. Paul established some contact with the gentiles by presenting Christianity as a meaningful moral system that allows people to live with integrity and dignity, but he would not just stop there without stressing that Christianity faith is more than just good advice.
- Who was the biblical audience who heard this text, and what were their circumstances?

The audience of this letter were mostly non-Jews whom Paul persuaded and many God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women in Thessalonica. They turned from their idols and received the gospel despite persecution. Paul referred to the audience as people who "turned to God from idols". They were persecuted because of their implicit or even explicit rejection of the claims of the imperial cult and their refusal to continue participating in the life of the city's cults and collegia. The audience became a suffering community through some form of persecution

from non-believers. They were also a confused community because they did not understand well some of the things Paul taught them. Such things as some of the church members stopping work and living off the largesse of other and not understanding the nature and the timing of the Lord's return.

- **What kind of relationship did the author have with the audience?**

Paul and his team introduced these Thessalonians to Jesus's gospel, and they received it well and they kept running and growing in their faith even though Paul was chased away. Paul had a deep affection with the Thessalonians which began during his initial visit that why he calls them brothers and sisters. Paul and team worked day night so not to burden the church by asking for money. The relationship was of a Pastor and his congregant who have just given their life to God, but still need some help in different ways. Even though Paul could not be with them physically he wanted to make sure that they stay focused on Jesus only. Paul tried to go back to see them, but Satan blocked him from doing so. Paul and his team had a high degree of mutual affection with the audience. He even worked with his hands when he was with him because he did not want to burden them, and the Thessalonians ministered to Paul's needs when he was with them.

- **Why was he writing?**

Reading through the book I can conclude that Paul had several reasons in mind when he wrote 1 Thessalonians. Paul wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their new faith but going through serious opposition and severe persecution. Both Jews and Gentiles did not like this new religious movement because Paul was winning many of them to Christ (Acts 17:5). He also wrote the letter to explain to some who might have upset thinking that Paul ran away and deserted them. He also heard about misinformation which was being spread about him and he wanted to correct that about himself and his fellow missionaries. Paul wanted also to give additional instruction that would help the Thessalonians' spiritual growth.

He also wanted to correct their mistaken eschatology for some thought Christ was only for those who were still alive and those who are dead would miss the resurrection. Paul corrects them (4:13-18). Paul wanted to remind them about the things he taught them which they misunderstood. Such things as some of the church members stopping work and living off the largesse of other and not understanding the nature and the timing of the Lord's return. Paul wrote also just to celebrate and cement the good relationship that he had with the believers in the community. In all Paul balanced encouragement, correction, and challenge to call the church to remain faithful to Christ even though things were not going their way.

- What kind of relationship did the biblical audience have with God? With each other? Even though Paul and his team left where chased away and left the newly Christians in Thessalonica. Thessalonians stood firm in the Lord. The Thessalonian church was doing a great job in these "basics" of faith, love, and hope.
- Are there any other historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book? Thessalonica was an important port city on the Aegean Sea, the capital of Roman province of Macedonia and was located at the crossroads of two major trade routes. This was significant culturally and economically. This city was home to a wide variety of religious groups. Multiple shrines and temples for deities such as Isis, Osiris, Serapis, and Cabirus.

## Bibliography

Arnold, Clinton E. *1 and 2 Thessalonians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Zondervan Academic, 2016.

Fee, Gordon D. *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Eerdmans, 2009.

Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*. Eerdmans, 2016.

J. Scott Duvall (Author), J. Daniel Hays (Author), Mark L. Strauss and Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Foreword). *Grasping God's Word, Fourth Edition: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Zondervan Academic; Illustrated edition, October 13, 2020.

Jeffrey A. D. Weima, Robert Yarbrough. *1-2 Thessalonians-Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Baker Publishing Group, 2014.

Johnson, Andy. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, n.d.

Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing The New Testament*. Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2009, 2018.

## STEP 2. CONFIRM THE LIMITS OF YOUR PASSAGE.

2.1. Decide where your self-contained passage begins and ends. Compare the paragraphing of seven modern translations (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NET, ASV, NASB, NKJV, etc. See Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 17).

- a) Where does the translation differ?

*The main idea from the passage was Paul addressing the audience to abstain from sexual impurity. In verse 3b ( NIV,NET,NKJV)- translated it as "sexual immorality" while (ASV-NRSVA) is translated to "fornication". Sexual immorality is broader.*

*V2 (NKJV) uses the term "commandments" which is a strong word and with divine nature in it.*

*The other versions(NIV,NRSVA) they use the word "instructions" ,"urge "and "commands".*

- b) Decide for yourself what the basic unit is. Provide clear reasons based on your observations. *The final decision will be part of the whole exegetical process.*  
c) **"I intend to focus on the following passage from 1 Thessalonians: 4: 1-6."**

## STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH.

3.1. Read the paragraph through in 5 translations (at least 2 from the more formal side of the spectrum, 2 from the middle, and 1 from the more functional side of the spectrum, see chart on p. 12).

- a) Copy these translations and mark well the differences among these translations (I like using colored highlighters). *This is a helpful step for those who do not know the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek.*  
b) Make a list (or chart) of the differences. *This chart will help you keep organized and sharpen your observation skills.*

### **1 Thessalonians: 4 1-6."**

NIV	NET	ASV	NRSVA	NKJV
-----	-----	-----	-------	------

<p>4.As for other matters, <b>brothers, and sisters, we</b> instructed you how to live in order to <b>please God</b>, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge <b>you in the Lord Jesus</b> to do this <b>more and more</b>.</p> <p><sup>2</sup><b>For you know what instructions we gave you</b> by the authority of <b>the Lord Jesus</b>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>It is <b>God's will that you</b> should be sanctified: that you should avoid <b>sexual immorality</b>;</p> <p><sup>4</sup><b>that each of you</b> should learn to <b>control your own body</b><sup>[a]</sup> in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup> not in passionate lust like the pagans, <b>who do not know God</b>;</p> <p><sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.<sup>[b]</sup> <b>The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins</b>, as we told you and warned you before.</p>	<p>4.<b>Finally then, brothers and sisters,</b><sup>[a]</sup> <b>we</b> ask you and urge <b>you in the Lord Jesus, that</b> as you received instruction from us about how<sup>[b]</sup> you must live and <b>please God</b> (as you are in fact living)<sup>[c]</sup> that you do so <b>more and more</b>.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>For you know what commands we gave you</b> through <b>the Lord Jesus</b>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> For this is <b>God's will: that you</b> become holy,<sup>[d]</sup> that you keep away from <b>sexual immorality</b>, <sup>4</sup> <b>that each of you know how to possess his own body</b><sup>[e]</sup> in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in lustful passion like the Gentiles <b>who do not know God</b>. <sup>6</sup> In this matter no one should violate the rights of his brother or take advantage of him,<sup>[f]</sup> <b>because the Lord is the avenger in all these cases</b>,<sup>[g]</sup> as we also told you earlier and warned you solemnly.</p>	<p>4.<b>Finally then, brethren, we</b> beseech <b>and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that</b>, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to <b>please God</b>, even as ye do walk, —that ye abound <b>more and more</b>.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>For ye know what</b> <sup>[a]</sup>charge <b>we gave you</b> through <b>the Lord Jesus</b>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> <b>For this is the will of God, even</b> your sanctification, that ye <b>abstain from fornication</b>;</p> <p><sup>4</sup><b>that each one of you</b> know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles <b>who know not God</b>;</p> <p><sup>6</sup> that no man <sup>[b]</sup>transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: <b>because the Lord is an avenger in all these things</b>, as also we <sup>[c]</sup>forewarned you and testified.</p>	<p>4.<b>Finally, brothers and sisters,</b><sup>[a]</sup> <b>we</b> ask and urge <b>you in the Lord Jesus that</b>, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to <b>please God</b> (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so <b>more and more</b>.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>For you know what instructions we gave you</b> through <b>the Lord Jesus</b>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> <b>For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication</b>;</p> <p><sup>4</sup><b>that each one of you</b> knows how to <b>control your own body</b><sup>[b]</sup> in holiness and honour, <sup>5</sup> not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles <b>who do not know God</b>;</p> <p><sup>6</sup>that no one wrongs or exploits a brother or sister<sup>[c]</sup> in this matter, <b>because the Lord is an avenger in all these things</b>, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.</p>	<p>4 <b>Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that</b> you should abound <b>more and more</b>, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to <b>please God</b>;</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>for you know what commandments we gave you</b> through <b>the Lord Jesus</b>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> <b>For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality</b>;</p> <p><sup>4</sup><b>that each of you</b> should know <b>how to possess his own vessel</b> in sanctification and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles <b>who do not know God</b>; <sup>6</sup> that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, <b>because the Lord is the avenger of all such</b>, as we also forewarned you and testified.</p>
---	---	---	--	---

3.2 Determine which of these differences are exegetically significant (i.e., how do these differences affect the meaning?).

- a) Are the differences a matter of the translators using different words (synonyms)?  
The differences are more than synonyms, some versions are using the words with more weight than the others. But they are not changing the meaning of the text.
- b) Are the differences a matter of grammar?  
Yes some differences are a matter of grammar. Some versions are using more words than others just to qualify their text.
- c) Are the differences stylistic or reflect a theological preference?  
I think it is just a theological preference.
- d) Are the differences due to variations in the manuscript evidence (i.e., textual criticism)?  
*Pay particular attention to marginal notes since they usually refer to matters of textual criticism (differences among Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that have survived).*

#### STEP 4: OVERVIEW OF LITERARY CONTEXT

4.1 Describe the literary character of the document (i.e., identify what kind of literature your passage reflects such as narrative [extended story form], a psalm, law, prophecy, epistle, or apocalypse). Remember, some biblical literature contains mixed forms such as the Book of Revelation, which consists of letters, prophecy, an extended narrative, and hymns.

If you choose to investigate an **epistle**, determine to what extent it is *ad hoc*, formal, causal, or more like a treatise than a letter, etc. (see Duvall and Hayes, chap. 14, "New Testament Letter," pp. 257-277).

This epistle is an occasional epistle because it was written to address specific issues which Timothy brought to Paul's attention. Paul started by encouraging the church to keep on praising even through all kinds of persecution. He addresses the issue on honor and shame because the church was going through shaming because of giving their life to Jesus. He told them that even if they are shamed in the eyes of the world, God will honor them. He also addressed the issue of sexual morality among them. He advised them on how they should live to please God by being honorable in matters of sexual morality. He also addressed the issue regarding some of the church members not working and feeding on others. He advised them to work using their hands as he did when he was with them. There was also a bigger issue which was troubling the church regarding their family members who had died and if they were going to miss resurrection. Paul provided new information for them to help them understand the issue.

4.2 All literary works have a structure in the mind of the human author. Biblical writers have a purpose in writing that guides their choices, whether to write a letter or produce a narrative. Even the very words they use are intentional. Cast the interpretive net widely before looking at the individual pieces that make up the message.

Give an original, detailed outline of the whole book and note the placement of your text within the outline.

**INTRODUCTION (1Th 1:1-4)**

1. Salutation (1Th 1:1)
2. Thanksgiving for their faith, hope, and love (1Th 1:2-4)

**I. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS (1Th 1:5-3:13)**

**A. REGARDING THEIR CONDITION (1Th 1:5-10)**

1. Their reception of the gospel (1Th 1:5-7)
2. Their reputation in every place (1Th 1:8-10)

**B. REGARDING HIS CONDUCT (1Th 2:1-12)**

1. The manner of his preaching (1Th 2:1-8)
2. The manner of his life (1Th 2:9-12)

**C. REGARDING HIS CONCERN (1Th 2:13-3:13)**

1. For their faithfulness (1Th 2:13-3:10)
2. For their continued growth (1Th 3:11-13)

**II. APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTIONS (1Th 4:1-5:28)**

**A. WALK IN HOLINESS (1Th 4:1-8)**

1. To please God (1Th 4:1-2)
2. To abstain from sexual immorality (1Th 4:3-8)

**B. WALK IN LOVE (1Th 4:9-10)**

1. As they are taught by God to love one another (1Th 4:9)
2. To increase more and more (1Th 4:10)

**C. WALK IN DILIGENCE (1Th 4:11-12)**

1. To work with their hands (1Th 4:11)
2. To walk properly toward those who are outside (1Th 4:12)

**D. WALK IN HOPE (1Th 4:13-18)**

1. With no sorrow concerning those who have died (1Th 4:13-14)
2. For we will be rejoined with them when Christ returns (1Th 4:15-18)

I.

**E.WALK IN LIGHT (1Th 5:1-11)**

1. For the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (**1Th 5:1-4**)
2. For we are sons of light and sons of the day (**1Th 5:5-8**)
3. For God has appointed us to salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (**1Th 5:9-11**)

**F.WALK IN OBEDIENCE (1Th 5:12-22)**

4. With respect toward those over us (**1Th 5:12-13**)
5. With concern for one another (**1Th 5:14-15**)
6. With joy, prayer and thanksgiving (**1Th 5:16-18**)
7. Don't quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, but don't be gullible either (**1Th 5:19-22**)

**CONCLUDING REMARKS (1Th 5:23-28)**

1. A prayer for their sanctification and preservation (**1Th 5:23-24**)
2. A request for prayer in his behalf (**1Th 5:25**)
3. A charge to greet one another with a holy kiss, and to read the epistle to others (**1Th 5:26-27**)
4. A benediction of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (**1Th 5:28**)

4.3 Start to make informed observations. Remember, you are not referring to commentaries right now, otherwise, you will become commentary-dependent and not able to bring fresh insight to the passage. You do not want to simply recycle other people's ideas!

- ✓ **(Epistle)** To what formal aspect of the letter does your text belong (i.e., is it part of the *introduction*--includes the greeting and thanksgiving paragraph—*body of the letter*, or the *conclusion*)? How does knowing where your passage fits within the formal structure affect your exegesis, or perhaps it does not from your perspective? How is your passage related to what just went immediately ahead and how does it prepare for what follows? *Be careful of over exegeting and making the section say more than it does. You simply want to gain a perspective of the whole first before working out the details.*

My text belongs to the body of the letter. Knowing that my passage fits in the body of the letter helps me to understand that this is the main purpose the letter was written. Regarding Paul's letters, his introductions and conclusions are generic. An Introduction does not contain the content and you cannot form a doctrine from it. Paul wrote this letter to address certain issues and the body has the content of what exactly the issue he wants to address.

Knowing where the passage fits affect the exegesis because you are now going in detail of the purpose of the letter. My passage is related to the introduction because that's where I get to know the audience of the letter this passage is addressing .

## STEP 5: DETAILED LITERARY ANALYSIS, STRUCTURE and SYNTAX, ARGUMENT, LANGUAGE FEATURES, GRAMMAR, AND WORD STUDY.

### 5.1 STRUCTURE, SYNTAX, AND LOGIC OF ARGUMENT.

5.1.1. Analyze the structure of your paragraph by starting with a close reading of sentences (cf. Duvall and Hayes, chap. 4, pp. 37-51.). Try using a "sentence flow" method to help clarify the flow of the human author's argument or story.

Simple "sentence-flow" method:

- 1) **Look at your passage as comprised of sentences that are made up of a series of phrases (chunks) designed to make sense.** For non-English speakers, this step can be challenging. I suggest you work in both your birth language and English translation. See if awareness of the chunks that comprise your sentences makes sense to you.
- 2) On a pad (or using your tech software) **write out your passage line by line in its smallest sensible units, that is phrases or thought units.** Phrases are a group of words that communicate an idea within the sentence and come together to make the sentence meaningful. Example: "I saw a cat **under my bed.**" If I were to write this out in its smallest units, I would lay it out something like this:  
**I saw** (gives me subject and action)  
**a cat** (gives me the object of what was seen by me)  
**under my bed** (tells me where I saw the cat)

This method will help reveal the structure of the sentence and will suggest good questions for you to try and answer. Do NOT worry if you are doing it right. The point is to begin observing the relationship among the phrases (how they fit together and build on one another). Do NOT become preoccupied with the minutiae of this method. Just start doing this in a way that makes sense to you!

- 3) Now focus on making connections by **playing with the text.** Use colored highlighters, circles, asterisks, etc. to note the relationships and special features: repeated words or concepts, syntactical relationships (how the words relate to

one another as to cause and effect, contrasts, comparison, figures of speech, and organizing structures like lists. See *Duvall and Hayes, p. 51 review.*)

**Example:**

**For God** → the one doing the action, “for” connects with the previous verse to explain why God wasn’t condemning the world right now

**So loved** → Why “so loved” and not just loved?

The world → the whole world as it is now?

**That He gave** → He = God, “loved” and “gave” (past act with ongoing results). 2 actions brought together.

His only begotten son → What does “only begotten” mean?

**So that** → expresses purpose or result? Gives reason.

Whoever believes in Him → whoever = anyone

Believes = present ongoing action

“in Him = Son” → object of belief, cannot believe in just anything or anyone

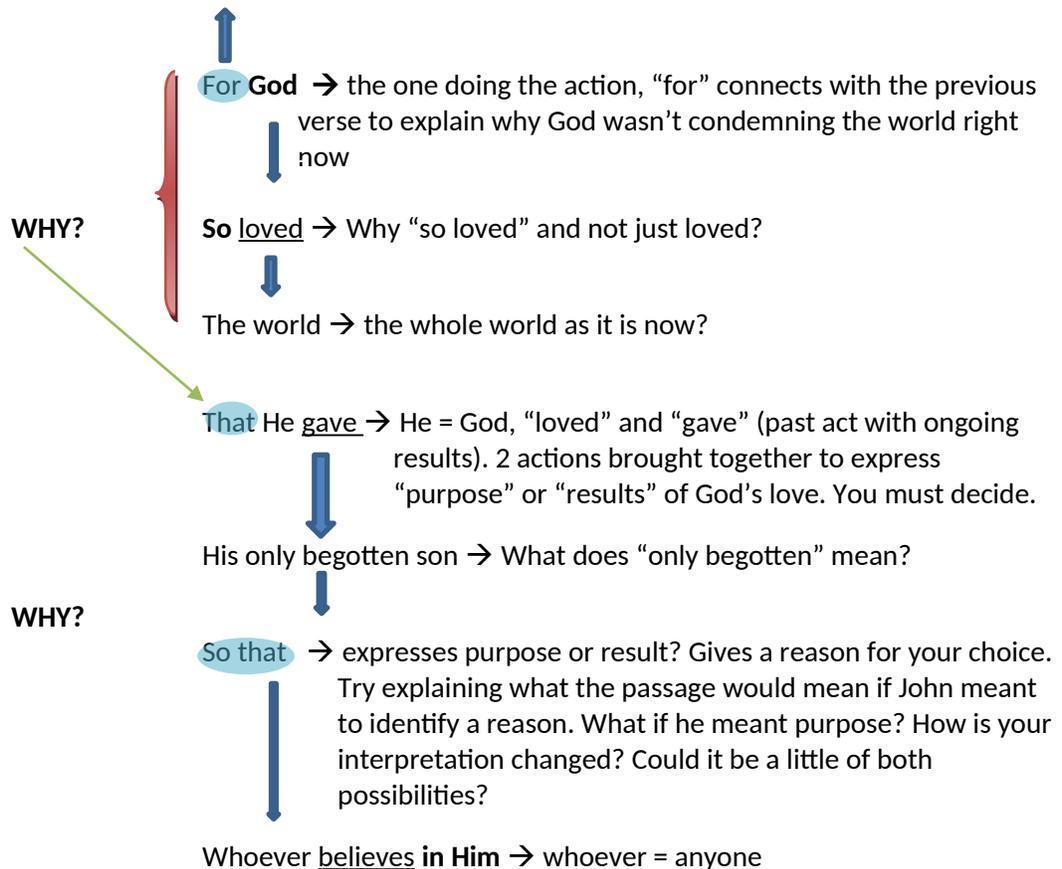
Should **not perish**

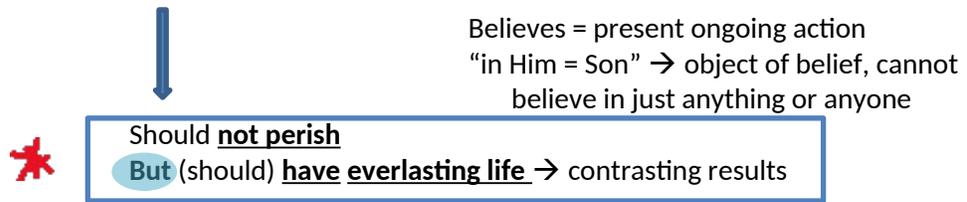
**But** (should) have everlasting life → contrasting results

- 4) Use arrows to note the flow of the argument to the main idea. Use an asterisk to identify what you think is the main idea.

**Example:**

Previous verse John 3:15. Your job is to observe the interconnections.





MAIN IDEA (?)

5.1.2 Write a summary of the information you can derive from your structure above. What words, relationships, or other structural indicators are important and why? (See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 4 "How to Read a Paragraph," pp. 57-80 for further help).

5.1.3 Set out briefly the logic and content of your text (how does the author weigh each step in his argument, etc.) and show the significance of your paragraph in the overall argument/ exhortation/story, etc.? (See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 5, "How to Read the Book—Discourses," pp. 81-106).

\*For OT narratives, analyze your passage within the narrative context (who are the main characters, what are they doing now, how do you know what you know about them, what is being said, what is the role of the narrator, etc.). Are there any persons, places, or names that need further investigation in a Bible dictionary? (See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 16, pp. 355-381).

**5.2 RHETORIC.** What "rhetorical features" (hyperbole, questions, commands, irony, parable, allegory, allusion, etc.) does your passage display? Rhetoric is a term we use for persuasion. Certain literary techniques will drive home a point you are trying to make. You must determine how any rhetorical features the human author uses to drive home his point. (It helps to remember that these writing were meant to be heard, so they are written for performance. Most people were illiterate and depended on others to read these biblical texts). How do these rhetorical features help with understanding the passage?

**5.3 GRAMMAR.**

**For Advanced or Tech astute Students:** (You may wish to use a Bible software program that identifies Greek and Hebrew words and grammar behind the English. Then you can look up the grammatical terms in the helpful resources, *Biblical Hebrew Companion* or *Biblical Greek Companion for Bible Software Users*).

Go verse by verse and identify the conjunctions, subjects, verbs, and direct and indirect objects. Then note their specific grammatical form (e.g., the software will identify this form for you). A sentence will tell you who does what and to whom. So, ask yourself, what insight does this grammar give you? *This section is best done in the original languages; however, by comparing translations you will begin to observe some unusual grammar that needs explanation.*

**For all students:** Make a chart and identify the parts of speech (conjunctions, subjects, verbs, direct and indirect objects. If you have time, note the adjectives and adverbs that give more description)

5.3.2 List here any difficult or unusual grammatical features of your text

Verse #	Conjunction	Subject (noun or noun clause)	Verb (action)	Direct Object	Indirect Object
---------	-------------	-------------------------------	---------------	---------------	-----------------

5.3.3 Determine which of the grammatical features need to be investigated further and give your reasons why. Make a list and check with a good exegetical commentary to see if they discuss the grammatical feature. You will want to include the most important features in your paper.

5.4 **WORD STUDIES.** (Note well Duvall and Hayes' discussion and warnings regarding word studies, chap. 9, pp. 165-192.)

5.4.1 Note any words which are crucial to the passage, repeated, figures of speech, or that are unclear, puzzling, or difficult.

5.4.2 For this notebook choose **one of the words** listed in 5.4.1 and determine the possible meanings of the word in the original Greek or Hebrew using The S.T.E.P. program (Scripture Tools for Every Person) available for free at [www.stepbible.org](http://www.stepbible.org).

Begin by identifying the Greek or Hebrew word (Duvall and Hayes, pp. 176-178 show you how to use S.T.E.P. for this task).

5.4.3. Determine how the word is used in different contexts (the rest of the Testament you are working in) and by whom.

Check all the occurrences of the Greek or Hebrew word using the “search for this word” feature in S.T.E.P. (See Duvall and Hayes explanation, pp. 178-180). *This step will take time, but it is essential for faithful interpretation.*

5.4.4 What are the ranges of meanings for this word? Does the author vary the meaning or use it in the same way elsewhere? Are any of these usages unique to the OT or NT?

Louw & Nida’s lexicon on semantic ranges of words is quite helpful for NT work. Try using the interactive online lexicon at <https://www.laparola.net/greco/louwnida.php> (Type in the English word and the Greek will pop up. Since you know your Greek word, click on the right one and you will be given a range of possible meanings.)

5.4.5 Which meaning is most likely here and why? (Use the questions suggested by Duvall and Hayes, pp. 181-183 to help you determine the best meaning for your passage).

**\*Word studies are some of the most useful tools you have for investigating a passage! We look for words in the original language because each culture means different things by these words. English translations can add something to a word that would never have been intended.**

#### **STEP 6. CULTURAL CONTEXT**

6.1 List features of your text that you suspect might be clarified by a greater knowledge of Jewish or Greco-Roman history and culture.

6.2 Choose one of these and, using the bibliography in Duvall and Hayes (pp. 120-134), explore the cultural background a little further and explain how this study may aid in an understanding of the cultural milieu of the author.

6.3 Evaluate the significance of this background data for the understanding of your passage.

**STEP 7. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS**

7.1 How does your passage compare to other passages in Scripture which address similar issues?

7.2 What would be lost or how would the message of the Bible be less complete if your passage did not exist?

7.3 What is the theological importance of your passage?

**STEP 8. ACCUMULATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES AND READ WIDELY.**

8.1 Find a combination of at least 6 commentaries, books, or academic or pastoral journal articles which deal with your passage and read the contributions of other scholars. List the sources here using the correct Turabian style).

8.2 What are some of the most significant differences (presuppositional, theological, hermeneutical, etc.) between your approach and that of some authors you have read?

8.3 State a few places where you will use other scholars' work to SUPPORT your conclusions, indicating some quotations from them worthy of citing in your paper. *"Be careful not to let*

*them dictate what you conclude about the passage. Be critical of your sources and do not be afraid to disagree with commentators. As always, cite your sources so as not to plagiarize,”* (Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God’s Word*, p. 506).

8.4 State a few places where significant differences between you and some scholar(s) demand that you deal with their views in your paper and show why they are wrong. *You need not write your full refutation here.*

8.5 Hypothesize what the passage of Scripture you chose to investigate means. Then write out a well-crafted preliminary thesis statement that either explains how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter or question under discussion, what to expect from the rest of the project/paper, and/or makes a claim that others might dispute. *A thesis statement is an essential part of any graduate project/paper, so you need to identify enough resources to support the claims being made. A thesis is often revised once you have gathered enough supporting evidence to begin your Final Project/Paper. The more quality attention is given here, the better your final project will be.*

Sermons may not use this written thesis, but they should reflect the preparation that went into the sermon and a thesis statement (reflected in the Big Idea) is an important part.

**YOU ARE NOW READY TO WRITE/PRODUCE YOUR PROJECT (PAPER, SERMON, ETC.)!**