

## **How to Enjoy Your Bible Basic Principles of Analysis**

**Intro: Let continue tonight to think together about how we can get the most from our time with God each day. If we are to maintain a relationship of intimacy with God, we must learn to attune our hearts to His voice and truly hear what He is seeking to say to us in His word.**

**Let's just use the word "read" to remind ourselves of four essentials to reading the Bible for all its worth. We need to read: 1. reverently; 2. expectantly; 3. analytically; 4. devotionally.**

**Let's focus for a few minutes on the third category. We must learn to read analytically. The information in God's word is not offered to us in disorganized form or mere random thoughts about religion. The Bible writers present their message in an organized way. As students of the Bible our job is to discover the organization in the mind of the authors of the Biblical documents so that we understand the thoughts being communicated. As we do this, we are fulfilling an often quoted verse:**

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

**Let's consider some things that will make us better Bible readers or students. Tonight let's think about some basic principles of textual analysis.**

### **Read the text repeatedly.**

Try to get a thoroughly familiar with a text before you start analyzing it. In fact, nothing will help you more than to read a part of Scripture many times in order to sense its organization. There is no substitute for becoming thoroughly familiar with the text itself!

Some people have found it helpful to reinforce their reading by listening to the Bible on tape or reading aloud. In fact, I've found that your ears will pick up things your eyes didn't see; and you can make connections that are important in the text.

### **Use good techniques of analysis**

#### **Look for repeated words or phrases!**

Look for words that dominate a section, since they suggest the key concepts being discussed.

You may want to give them a hierarchy--what words or concepts are mentioned most often, second most often.

#### **Simplify the text.**

Look at the structure (another lesson on this). How is the writer communicating his message.

Reduce long sentences to this simple subject and verb. I have found it extremely helpful to simply jot down or underline the subject word and the verb of each sentence. This clues me in on how the writer is approaching his subject and what he is trying to say. It helps me to follow the basic argument of the paragraph.

Watch for verbal roadsigns!

In the Scripture there are many words that help clue us in on the relation of thought. (2 Pet. 1:16-21 will illustrate:)

"For" explains the thought. It usually translates the Greek word "gar" which ordinarily is used by the author to drill down or explain more fully something has been said. It often introduces a sub-point in the writers main idea.

"And" enlarges the thought. Often the writer may couple ideas that build toward a conclusion.

"But" contrasts the thought. Often a writer makes use of contrast to highlight his point.

"Therefore" or "wherefore" or "thus" or "so" summarizes or concludes the thought. The writer uses these terms to suggest an application or what has been said or to summarize the points that have been made.

Ask yourself, "What's the big idea?"

**Here is a model for understanding a text that comes from Haddon Robinson's book on Expository Preaching.**

Identify the subject

What word best describes what this paragraph is about? Is it about God? about a certain quality Christians should have? Is it about a Biblical character?

Define the theme

What is the writer saying about his subject? What is the thrust of the whole reading? To what conclusion does the writer appear to be leading us?

Expand to the contributing points

How does the writer communicate his main idea? What arguments or points are used to reach the conclusion? How do the less important things help build the case for the main idea?

Articulate in your own words

How would I explain it to someone else? We show we have grasped an idea when we can communicate it to others.

**Let's Put these principles to use with a paragraph from 1 Peter 1**

***Reading the text repeatedly, noting repeated words and concepts. Let's look for themes:***

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a*

*living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:3-12)*

***Let's start with a subject verb analysis and see if we discover anything.***

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:3-12)*

By doing a subject-verb analysis we can see several things:

Note Peter's structure: He expresses his ideas by description.

Note how that for stylistic variation his description alternates between what God is doing and what God's people are doing. The "He" vs. the "you."

Note how Peter stresses the love and joy (praise) of the Christian in what God has been doing and what they have received.

***Let's look for repeated words or concepts***

What is the reason for this great love and joy? What had God done?

What have Peter and his readers received from him?

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:3-12)*

We're beginning to see what is that causes Christians to love and rejoice and to "bless God"--it is experiencing the blessings of becoming a child of God.

We are born into His family

We are given a living hope--an inheritance.

We will experience praise, honor, and glory.

We will be saved.

We experience what prophets spoke about and angels long to look into.

***We could dig a lot deeper, looking at the relationship between ideas, expanding each one more fully; but we have probably gotten the key ideas from this paragraph.***

Identify the subject--The blessings of being a child of God

Define the subject--The blessings of being a child of God produce love, joy, and praise in the heart of God's children, even though he must go through persecution.

Expand

We are born into His family

We are given a living hope--an inheritance.

We will experience praise, honor, and glory.

We will be saved.

We experience what prophets spoke about and angels long to look into.

Articulate

Peter tells us why we as God's children have reason to rejoice, to love and praise God even though our faith may be tested by trial.

**Conclusion: As we practice these skills, we become better equipped to read the word meaningfully. We get where we know what to look for and the text takes on a new clarity in our minds. God is really speaking to our hearts!**