

Lesson - Completing a Book Survey

Last week we introduced a method of studying the Bible that focuses on two key aspects of the text. The first aspect is the historical context of the passage we are studying. The second is the way in which that passage fits into the larger book from which it came. Our work this week will major on that second aspect as we create a book survey of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Step 2 - Outline the Book

Hopefully you were able to read Philippians several times this past week. The repeated readings of this short letter probably resulted in several important outcomes. First, you became VERY familiar with the text. Second, you probably noticed, at a minimum, three to five key words or ideas that occur throughout the book. Third, even though this was not part of the assignment, you may have recognized a certain flow and organization to the letter. That flow and organization is the focus of this step.

If at all possible, find a version of the book you are studying without section headings. Chapter and verse headings were added to the Latin Vulgate in the twelfth century. By the middle of the sixteenth century, they had become commonplace and the Geneva Bible was the first English Bible to include them. While the chapter headings sometimes break the flow of events or a train of thought by the writer, they are helpful in being able to quickly locate a passage.

Good intentions motivated the first publisher to include section headings to our contemporary printed Bibles. Section headings give us a sense of what we are about to read. If you flip through the pages, the section headings provide a general outline of the book itself. Section headings can be helpful in our reading of the Bible.

However, chapter and verse divisions and section headings can hinder our efforts in this step of our study. One of the characteristics of the Inductive Bible Study method (IBS) taught in this course is that we want to approach the text as impartially as possible. In these first two steps, we want to read the text as if we are reading it for the first time and in the way the author intended. Most of the New Testament is written in epistolary form (like a letter). It seems no one writes letters anymore, but when they do, section headings are never part of that process.

Another reason to avoid headings is we may disagree with the division and/or title of that section. Does that mean the publisher or translation committee got it wrong? Shouldn't we trust people who have more experience and knowledge than we in these matters? As you gain

more experience with this process, you will discover that you probably agree with most of the established divisions publishers use. You will also discover that some of those divisions truly are arbitrary and some section headings could move up or down a few verses and change very little in how the text is understood.

Where can we find a Bible without headings? Depending on the size of the book, you can use websites that provide Bible translations and word processing software to remove them. Publishers are realizing a market exists for Bibles without headings, chapter and verse divisions, and even columns. You can now purchase what is called a “Reader’s Bible” in just about any translation you’d like.

In the end, you will not grow less like Christ instead of more if you use a text with headings. You will not be classified as an inferior Christian when compared to the person who did not use headings. Don’t stress over it. Simply practice awareness in how it shapes your reading and understanding of the text.

When we create a book outline, we want to identify the arrangement of ideas in the whole book. If you are a detailed oriented person, this part may be more difficult for you. Think big picture.

Sample Outlines

Here are three examples of outlines to give you an idea of just how big to make your picture.

Outline of Galatians

- I. Greetings 1:1-5
- II. Paul’s Authority 1:6 - 2:21
- III. Faith vs. Law 3:1 - 5:12
- IV. Spirit Guided Freedom 5:13 - 6:16
- V. Closing 6:17-18

Outline of Matthew

- I. Preparation for the Messiah 1:1 - 4:17
- II. Ministry of Jesus 4:18 - 16:20
 - A. Teaching/Healing 4:18 - 9:34
 - B. Response to his teaching 9:35 - 16:20
- III. Ministry of the Messiah 16:21 - 27:31
 - A. Teaching/Miracles 16:21 - 20:33

- B. Response to his teaching 20:33 - 27:31
- IV. Messiah Fulfilled 27:32 - 28:20

Outline of Genesis

- I. Creation & Population of the World Ch.1 thru 11
 - A. Creation Marred by Sin Ch.1 thru 3
 - B. The Effects of Sin Ch.4 thru 11
- II. Creation of a Nation/People Ch.12 thru 50
 - A. The Call of & Promise to Abraham Ch.12 thru 20
 - B. Generation 1 of the Promise: Isaac Ch.21 thru 24
 - C. Generation 2 of the Promise: Jacob Ch.25 thru 36
 - D. Generation 3 of the Promise: Joseph Ch.37 thru 50

Note how the general length of each book helps determine the detail of the outline. Galatians, another epistle similar in length to Philippians has five broad sections. The three middle sections can definitely be broken down into subtopics, which we will note on our graphic representation later.

The Gospel of Matthew is longer, comprising twenty-eight chapters. There are so many events and teaching portions that the outline could be much more detailed. In fact, many pastors, teachers, theologians, and scholars organize their outline of Matthew around those main teaching events. The above outline was developed to represent what this writer believes the main idea of Matthew's Gospel to be - Jesus is indeed the prophesied Jewish Messiah.

Genesis is much longer than either book. Its outline is divided up by whole chapters, even though in reality those events may indeed cross over chapter boundaries. We are simply trying to paint a big picture. Genesis is organized around one key idea - God's plan to provide salvation for a sinful race through the lineage of one chosen individual.

One final note about creating your book outline. Your outline of Galatians, Matthew, and Genesis may be very different from the examples above. That's the beauty of this step in the IBS process. Your organization around a different set of ideas or main points will bring out an equally important meaning of the text.

Identifying the Structure

You read the book several times. You noted important themes, words, people, places, and things which repeat throughout the book. You organized the book around the main ideas it

presents. Now it's time to identify how the writer relates those ideas to one another through the grammatical structures of the text.

You already identified one of those structures when you made your list of repeated ideas. Officially, you made a list of **RECURRENCES**. Here is a list of important grammatical structures you may find in the text, with their description and examples.¹

- **RECURRENCE** - repetition of the same or similar terms, phrases, etc.
 - Example: Scripture is stated to be fulfilled in the events in the Gospel of Matthew (1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:14-16; 8:17; 11:10; 12:17-21; 13:14-15, 35; 15:7-9; 21:4-5, 13, 16, 42; 26:31, 54-56; 27:9)
- **CAUSATION** - the movement from Cause to Effect. The events or ideas presented in one section lead to or directly cause the events or ideas in the next.
 - Key word: therefore
 - Example: God's plan of salvation is detailed in Ephesians 1:3 - 3:21 and this plan results in a new life that Paul describes in 4:1 - 6:9.
- **SUBSTANTIATION** - the movement from Effect to Cause. The events or ideas presented in one section provide rationale for those in the previous section.
 - Key words: For, because, since
 - Example: God gives sinners up to their debased minds because they did not see fit to acknowledge him (Romans 1:28) as detailed in the behaviors described in the preceding verses.
- **COMPARISON** - similarities and likeness among events, ideas, etc. are stressed by the writer
 - Key words: Like, as
 - Example: The events of Abraham's life and Isaac's life follow similar paths and in some cases involve identical situations.
- **CONTRAST** - differences among events, ideas, etc. are stressed by the writer
 - Key words: But, however
 - Example: Paul contrasts a life governed by obeying the law in Galatians 3:1 -5:12 with living in the freedom of the Spirit in 5:13 - 6:16
- **PARTICULARIZATION** - the movement from general to specific

¹ A major tip of the hat and thank you to Dr. David Bauer, Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary for the excellent class notes he provided many years ago to this writer, who was then a young seminary student. This section and the accompanying appendix depend heavily upon those notes.

- Example: Paul details new behaviors that should be characteristic of our new life in Christ (Colossians 3:12-17) by detailing how those behaviors look in the lives and relationships of wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters (Colossians 3:18-4:1)
- GENERALIZATION - the movement from specific to general
 - Example: Chapters 3 through 6 of Genesis detail individuals who were faithful to follow God. Chapter 12 begins the process of creating a larger group of people that will follow God because of their Abrahamic lineage.
- PREPARATION/REALIZATION - the background or setting of the events or ideas
 - Example: God tells Moses he will worship God on the same mountain where he was called and will do so with the Israelites (Exodus 3:12). The Israelites reach Mt. Sinais in Exodus 19, choose to worship God and build the Tabernacle in chapters 35 through 40.
- CLIMAX - the movement from lesser to greater, towards a point of culmination and intensity
 - Example: The Gospel of Matthew ends with the resurrection of Jesus, after showing himself to be the prophesied Messiah and then being crucified.
- STATEMENT OF PURPOSE/INSTRUMENTATION - the movement from one means to an end; a statement that declares the end, or purpose, and the means whereby that end is achieved
 - Key words: In order that, so that
 - Example: Paul left Titus in Crete “so that” he could appoint elders, bring order to the newly formed churches, and provide pastoral care for the new Christians (Titus 1:5). The rest of the letter provides a short description of what the office of pastor looks like.
- SUMMARIZATION - summarizing either the preceding or following section
 - Example: Paul details how to mature as a Christian in Philippians 3:1 - 4:7 and summarizes it by describing in general terms a Christian’s life, actions, and attitude in 4:8-9.
- INTERROGATION - a problem or question followed by its solution or answer
 - Example: *Problem* - After God chooses Israel as his special people (Exodus 19:5-6) and while he is giving the law to Moses (20:1-31:18), the Israelites form an idol and worship it (32:1-6). *Solution* - Some of the guilty are killed by the sons of Levi (32:25-29), God sends a plague (32:35), and Moses intercedes for Israel

(32:11-13). The people renew the covenant on their end, choosing to serve God and build the Tabernacle (34:10-40:33)

- INCLUSIO - the repetition of the same word(s) or phrase at the beginning and end of a section, producing a bracket effect
 - Example: The constant state of battle during the period of Israel's history in the Book of Judges is accentuated by Israel asking God, "Who shall fight for us?" first in Judges 1:1 after the death of Joshua, then again in 20:18 after the rebellion of the tribe of Benjamin at the end of the book.

- CHIASM - the repetition of elements in reversed order, usually accompanied by some form of contrast
 - Example: In Mark 2:27, Jesus teaches about the Sabbath
 - A - The Sabbath
 - B - was made for man
 - B' - not man
 - A' - for the Sabbath

Asking Questions about the Structures

Trying to identify all those structures in your work might seem a little overwhelming. Here are four reasons why the work is worth it.

- 1) They are _____, not prescriptive.
- 2) They are deeply embedded in the human _____
_____.
- 3) They operate on a _____ basis.
- 4) They are practical in our _____ of the text and its
_____.

Asking questions about the structures you have identified aid in your understanding of the text. A list of questions for each structure is provided at the end of this lesson. You ask many of these questions naturally and subconsciously as you are doing the work itself. Deliberately considering these questions forces that work to occur on the conscious level and enables us to consider the meaning of the text in different and deeper ways.

Other Considerations

Completing a survey of any book of the Bible includes identifying elements about the origin of the text. Include answers to the following questions in your survey. Only include answers you can get from the text itself, including chapter and verse to help keep you to this rule. There will be time later to investigate other sources if the answers to these questions are not in the text.

- Who wrote the book?
- To whom was the book written?
- When was the book written? Focus on establishing a time relative to known events versus an exact year. Remember, our current numbering system of the years did not begin until about 500 years after Jesus walked the earth.
- Why was the book written?
- What is the key verse or strategic area of the text?
- What is your thirty second summary (or one minute for a longer book) of the book?

Finally, one other option you may want to add to your survey is a size-proportioned graphic outline. Different styles have been provided for each of the outlines given above. The advantage of these versions is the visual understanding the different sized portions give you. In the case of the Genesis example, you can also see how the recurrences are spread throughout the book.

Homework

You are now ready to complete your own book survey of the Book of Philippians. At a minimum, complete the following elements:

- Answer the questions in the *Other Considerations* section above
- Create a text outline of the book
- Identify any key grammatical structures that join the sections you used in your outline
- If you haven't already done so, make a list of the recurrences you discovered in your reading last week.

Major Structural Relationships and Sample Questions

(adapted from the work of Dr. David R. Bauer)

- Recurrence - What is the meaning of the recurring element? How do the individual occurrences relate to add understanding to one another? Why this recurrence? What are the implications of this recurrence?
- Causation - How does this cause produce this effect? What are the major elements involved in this movement from cause to effect? What is the meaning of each of those elements? Why did the writer include this causation? What are the implications of this causation?
- Substantiation - How does this section cause the previous one? What are the major elements involved in this movement from effect to cause? What is the meaning of each of those elements? Why did the writer include this substantiation? What are the implications of this substantiation?
- Comparison - What are major points of similarity emphasized by the writer? What is the precise and specific meaning of each of these similarities? Why did the writer stress these similarities and deal with them in this way? What are the implications of these similarities?
- Contrast - What major differences are emphasized by the writer? What is the precise and specific meaning of each of these differences? Why did the writer deal with the differences in this way? What are the implications of these differences?
- Particularization - What is the meaning of the general concept? How is the general concept particularized in the material that follows? How do the particulars add understanding to the general concept? Why did the writer include this movement from general to specific? What are the implications of this movement from general to specific?
- Generalization - What is the meaning of the particular concept? How is the particular concept generalized in the material that follows? How does the general concept add understanding to the particulars? Why did the writer include this movement from specific to general? What are the implications of this movement from specific to general?
- Preparation/Realization - What is the meaning of the background material? How does it prepare for what follows? Why did the writer prepare for what follows in this way? What are the implications of this preparation?

- Climax - How does this section reach its climax in this passage? How does the development of the climax add understanding to the climactic passage and to the material leading up to the climax? Why did the writer include this climax? What are the implications of this climax?
- Statement of Purpose/Instrumentation - What is the meaning of the purpose statement itself? How does the purpose statement add understanding to the means by which it is achieved? How does the purpose statement add understanding to the ends that are achieved? How do the means cause or produce the ends? Why did the writer include this purpose statement? What are the implications of this purpose statement?
- Summarization - How does the passage summarize the material that precedes (or follows)? How does the preceding material add understanding to the summarization? Why did the writer include this summarization? What are the implications of this summarization?
- Interrogation -
 - Questions for Problem/Solution type: What is the meaning of the problem presented here? How is the problem solved? What are the major elements involved in moving from problem to solution? What is the meaning of each of those elements? Why did the writer include this problem/solution? What are the implications of the problem/solution?
 - Questions for Question/Answer type: What is the meaning of the question presented here? How does the answer address this question? What is the full and precise meaning of the answer? Why did the writer include this question/answer? What are the implications of the question/answer?
- Inclusio - What are the major similarities presented here? What is the meaning of each? How does the inclusion strengthen the comparison? How does the inclusio add understanding to the major similarities? Why did the writer emphasize these similarities? Why did the writer use this inclusio to strengthen or support this comparison? What are the implications of this inclusio?
- Chiasm - What are the major differences presented here? What is the meaning of each? How does the chiasm strengthen the contrast? How does the chiasm add understanding to the major differences? Why did the writer emphasize these differences? Why did the writer use this chiasm to strengthen or support this contrast? What are the implications of this chiasm?