

New Testament Exegesis Paper Guidelines

1. Select a passage of 6-10 verses from the books or chapters listed at the end of this handout or another passage that I have approved in advance. Start today!

OBSERVATION STUDY: (begin your research by following these steps)

2. Read the passage **several times** thoughtfully in different translations, preferring **more literal** translations (e.g., NASB, TNIV, NRSV RSV). Read it through so often that a clear outline of the passage emerges in your mind.
3. Observe the literary context of your passage. What came before it? What comes after it? Why is the biblical writer saying this here at this point in the book?
4. As you go through the passage, make a list of all the problems, issues, questions, difficulties, things you are not completely clear about in your passage, and the things you need to study further. Spend some time resolving these questions through further study in commentaries on the book from which your passage comes. You may not solve all the problems, but do the best you can. Keep notes on what you find.
5. Study and take notes on the cultural-historical background you need to know in order to fully understand the passage. You will need to research this in good exegetical commentaries, Bible encyclopedias, and Bible dictionaries (e.g., *The Dictionary of New Testament Background*, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, or *The New International Bible Encyclopedia*).
6. Define or clarify all key words or concepts in the passage. Do you know what the key ideas in your passage are? What are the most important things?
7. Make a clear, logical, and detailed outline of the passage (with verse-numbers included). This is not an outline of your paper; you will do that later. This is an outline of the ideas in your passage, with main points and sub-points.
8. Re-state the passage in your own words (try not using any of the main nouns or verbs in the your chosen passage), showing the relationship of each verse to the one before and after it.

INTERPRETATION STUDY: (this will be the heart of your paper, the main content)

9. Go through the passage verse by verse; make notes on the meaning of each verse. What is this verse saying and how is it connected to what the writer has just said in the previous verse? You will use these notes in writing the main section of your paper. Is there a parallel passage in another Gospel or NT letter? How is the parallel different from your passage?
10. Write a brief summary of the theological and/or ethical teachings of the passage. What would the original readers have understood the truths and/or actions to be that the writer wanted them to understand or to take?
11. Think about how the passage applies today. Write a one-paragraph conclusion to your paper. Take into account any differences of cultural or historical circumstances that affect how to apply the passage today.

WRITING THE PAPER:

12. Write a one-paragraph introduction for your paper (some people like to save this for last), telling the reader why you chose this passage and why it is important.
13. Using all the notes you collected (above) from your study and your research (exegetical commentaries, Bible dictionaries, other books and articles), write your paper (1250-2000 words) using "Observation" and "Interpretation" as the two main headings/sections of your paper. In each section, record the results of your study.

14. THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR PAPER

Introduction - see above

Observation

Literary Context - see above

Problems and Issues - Resolved and Unresolved - see above

Historical and Cultural Background - see above

Key Words and Ideas Explained - see above

An Outline of the Passage (single spaced) - an outline is not a list of the verses

Interpretation

Exegesis - a verse by verse explanation of the passage

Theological-Ethical Teaching - see above

Conclusion

Application - see above

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES TO CONSIDER:

Select a unit of continuous verses from one of the following chapters. A unit is a set of paragraphs. Do not break up a paragraph.

Matthew 5, 6, 7

Luke 10, 15

John 1, 3, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21

Acts 2, 15, 17

Romans 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14

1 Corinthians 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

2 Corinthians 4, 5

Galatians 5, 6

Ephesians 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Philippians 1, 2, 3, 4,

Colossians 1, 2, 3, 4

1 Thessalonians 4, 5

Any chapter in Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, or 1 John