

Inductive Study: Epistles (NEW VERSION)

Overview Summary: Read the entire letter, summarizing observations about

1. Situation and identity of author, audience, and third parties
Chart historical situation and relationships between author, audience and third parties
2. Major themes – note repeated ideas and terms
Summarize themes
3. Summarize: why is the letter written?

Paragraph study: Carefully read the paragraph understanding the following points

1. *Structure* (skeleton): Goal: clarify thought or argument development
 - a. Diagram the paragraph – note independent clauses and their dependent clauses.
Hint: It helps to do this through indenting the clauses to represent which clauses they are subordinate to.
 - b. Main point (claim)— identify the author’s main point in the paragraph
Hints:
 - Imperatives
 - Connective words such as: thus, so, therefore, then...
 - Overarching, controlling idea—big picture statement, context, repeated terms
 - Independent clause expressing a complete thought
 - Note: Sometimes more than one main point
 - c. Supporting points—the bases for the main claim: *why* it’s true or *why* we should do what it says or sometimes answers *how* we should do the main point – list as individual summary phrases (with verse number),
Hints:
 - Indicative statements
 - Connective words: since, because, for, if...
 - Dependent clauses
 - Illustration or example
 - d. Literary/theological context—what is the main point of paragraph before and after?
State how the paragraph fits into the argument of the section.
Hint: Simply copy the main point you determined for the prior paragraph. For the following paragraph do a quick read-through, identify the clause that appears likely to represent the main point, and note it here.
2. *Theology* (muscle) – Understand the *content* of the paragraph.
 - a. Identify and define unfamiliar, historically significant, and key words; use of Old Testament.
 - b. State theological meaning of claim and supporting points, including how the theology of supporting points relate to the main claim.
 - c. What other passages might bear on your interpretation?
3. *Application* (skin)—what to do?
 - a. How is the argument of the paragraph intended to affect the original audience in terms of actions, attitudes, convictions?
 - b. How is the argument of this passage relevant to me/my group?