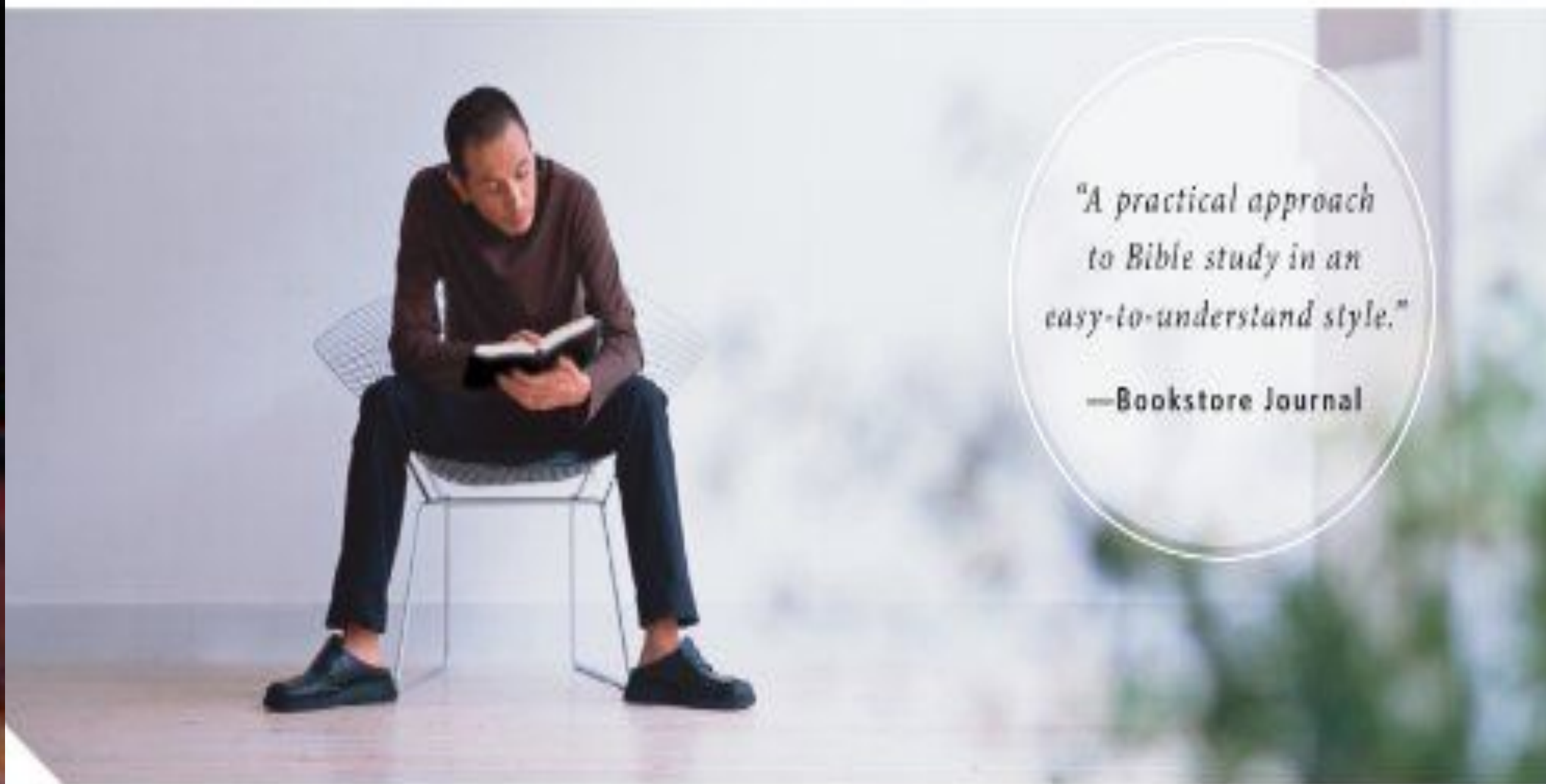




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FOURTH EDITION

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth



*"A practical approach
to Bible study in an
easy-to-understand style."*

—Bookstore Journal

Gordon D. Fee
Douglas Stuart

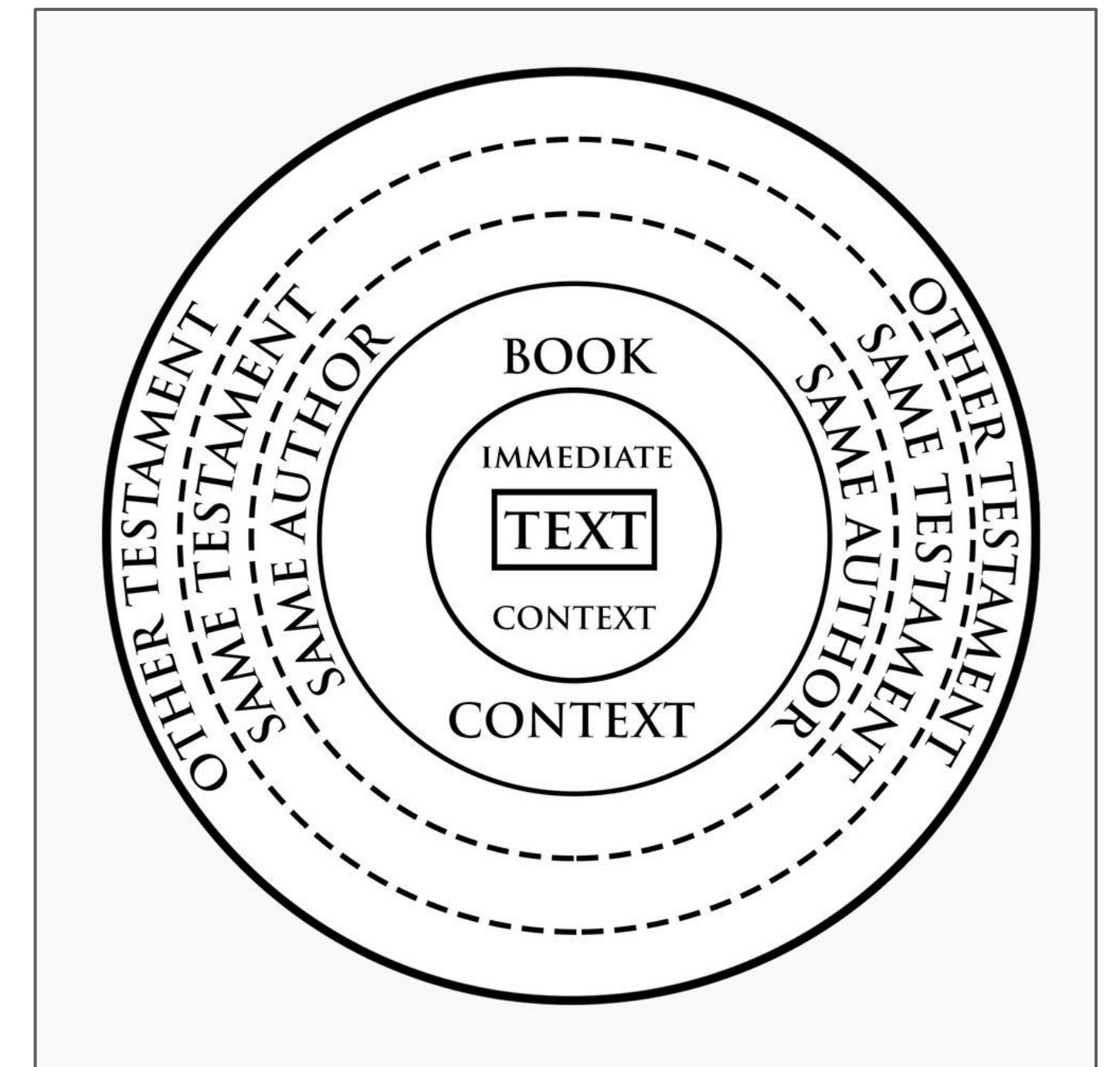
How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth

An 8 week introductory study with
classroom participation

Week 8: Literary Genre: Epistles

Week 7: RECAP: Parables

- Stories intended to illicit a response from the hearer as they convey a truth
- Question or Attitude? When Jesus told a parable, he was dealing with either/both among his audience
- 3 Broad Parable categories: Didactic (“Teaching), Evangelical, Prophetic & Judicial
- Jesus expected audience to understand parables as he spoke them “alongside” his teaching



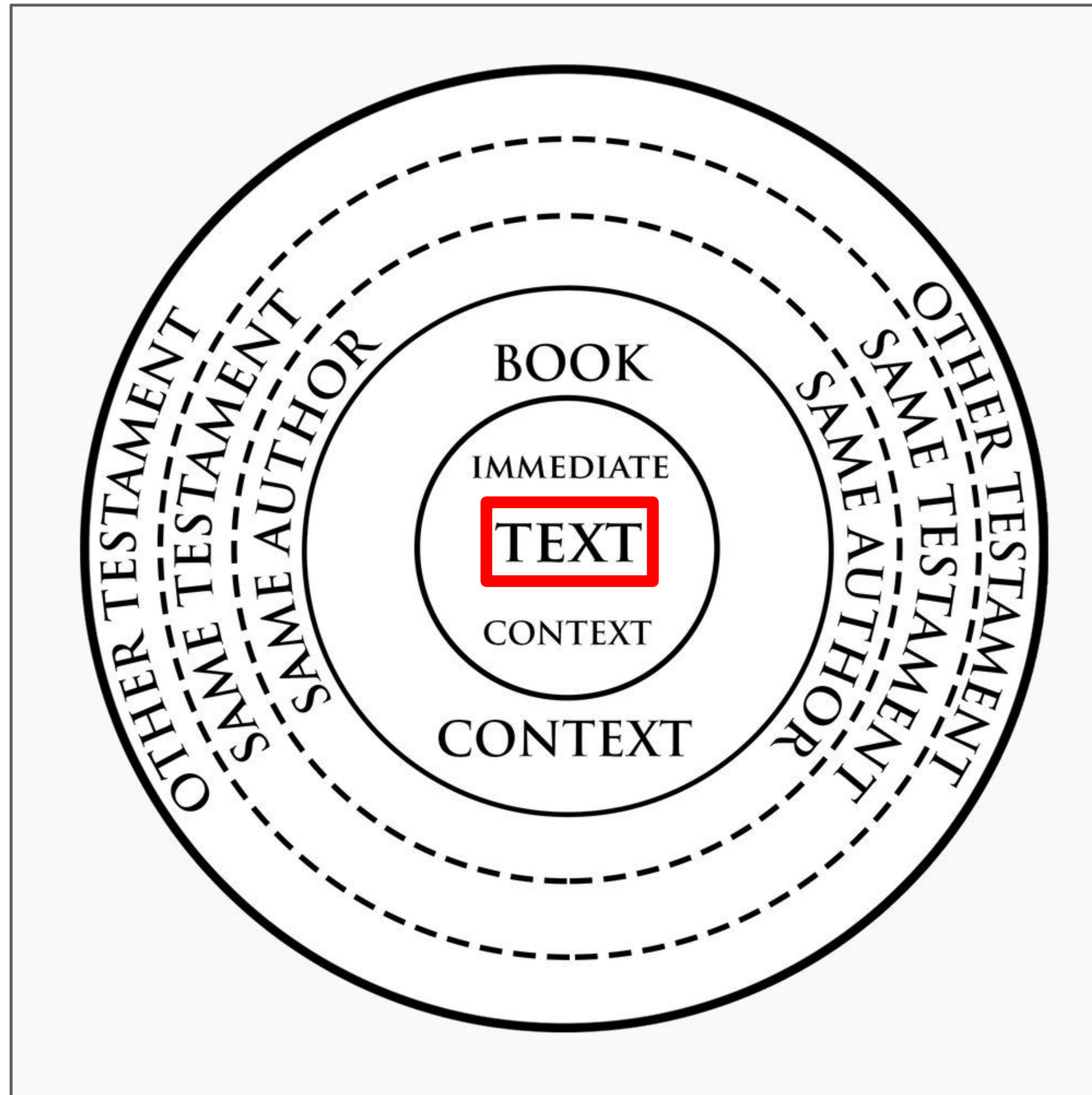
Prepared by Pastor Ted Rathman and Todd Frehafer
with the grateful assistance of Table Group Leaders

Epistles - New Testament

An epistle is doctrinal or instructional in nature. Those **21 books** are not merely friendship letters, although they do contain personal greetings in their openings and closings. Nor are they merely theological tracts. They contain doctrine meant to educate their readers concerning the purpose and plan of God for the specific need(s) of the recipients.

- Occasional in nature (arising out of an intended for a specific occasion).
- Not written as a series of systematical doctrines, but do contain doctrinal statements systematically written. Context of paragraphs (literary units) are very important in epistles to discern author's train of thought.
- All written in the 1st century AD

The Concentric Circles of Bible Interpretation



Identify smallest (minor) literary units
Paragraphing is already provided in most translations.

- Epistles and Hebrew Narrative: paragraph
- Poetry: strophe or stanza
- Proverb: overall theme encircling individual proverb
- Prophecy: entire oracle
- Gospel: paragraph (narrative); elsewhere one teaching session, parable, theme

Four Categories of Epistles/Letters

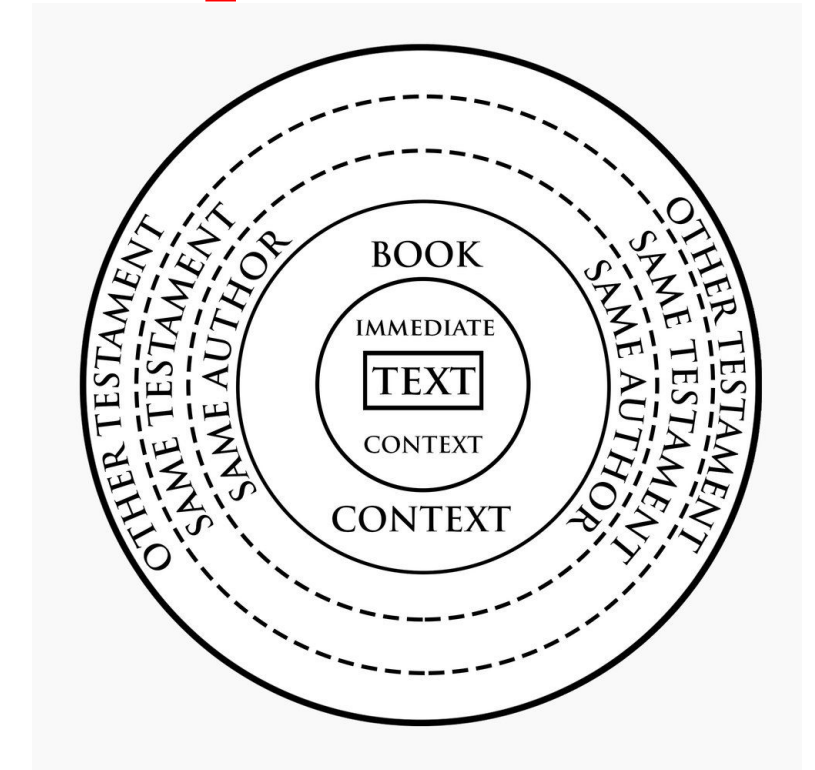
1. Pauline Church Epistles (6) - Addressed to specific churches & generally longer than others
 - Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1&2 Thessalonians
2. Pauline Prison Letters (4) - Written during imprisonment in Rome (c.60 AD)
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
3. Pauline Pastoral Letters (3) - Addressed to individuals with pastoral oversight of churches and discuss issues of Christian living, doctrine and leadership.
 - 1&2 Timothy, Titus
4. Non-Pauline Epistles (8) - Includes letters written by James (most likely the half-brother of Jesus) and Jude (most likely the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus)
 - Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1,2&3 John, Jude

General Format of an Epistle (varies)

1. Name of the writer (e.g., Paul)
2. Name of the recipient (e.g., to the church of God at Corinth)
3. Greeting (e.g., Grace and peace to you from God our Father)
4. Prayer wish or thanksgiving (e.g., I always thank God for you)
5. Body
6. Final greeting and farewell (e.g., The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.)

Basic Exegetical Steps to Discover Epistle Meaning

1. **Pray.** We are asking God to give us **illumination** as to what He **revealed** to the **inspired** biblical author.
2. Read the entire epistle in one sitting
 - a. Note major theme(s) of letter
 - b. Note historical context - author/date/setting/culture/occasion of letter
3. Re-read!
 - a. Mark out major divisions (literary units or “thought blocks”) of author.
 - b. Look for changes in subject, time, topic, location, style, etc. **TRANSITION WORDS!**
4. Identify smallest (minor) literary units: Epistles are written in paragraphs
5. Look for major **characters** and recurring **words** or theological **terms** (isolated or pervasive)
6. Interpretation moves upward from paragraph to larger context of the entire book
7. Compare text to other epistles by the same author
8. Compare text to other epistles of the same period, genre, or Testament
9. Compare text to the Bible as a whole



Four Important Exegetical Keys to Epistles

1. The recipients (Jew or Greek, wealthy or slave, problems)
2. The author's attitude to the recipients (compliments, criticism)
3. Specific matters given occasion to the epistle
4. The natural, logical divisions of the epistle

Mirror-reading the Epistles (Exegesis)

“Mirror-reading a letter involves, of course, looking at an ‘image’ (part of a conversation) and trying to discern the original ‘object’ (the original discussion or context). From a letter of Paul, for instance, we can learn some details about the situation against which he might be reacting.... But not all the details are clear, so gap-filling is required to understand why Paul writes the things he does in the letter.”

5 Things to Pay Attention To in Mirror Reading

1. The type of statement

- a. Assertion: likely imply that someone is practicing or teaching the opposite
- b. Denial: implies that someone has made a false claim about the author
- c. Command: implies that people are not doing what is described
- d. Prohibition: implies that people are doing what is mentioned

2. **Tone**: Does he issue the above statements with emphasis or urgency?

3. **Frequency**: Does Paul repeat this theme/idea often enough to indicate he's responding to an issue?

4. **Consistency**: We should assume that each letter addresses one core problem, argument, or person/group, unless it is explicit that diverse issues are being addressed.

1. *Example*: In 1 Corinthians, Paul explicitly shifts topics and groups.

2. *Example*: In 1 Thessalonians, there are a variety of problems addressed, but they could all be explained as manifestations of one core issue: zealous concern over Christ's return.

5. **Historical Plausibility**: Do we have evidence that the reconstructed group/ideas existed at the time?

Hermeneutical Rules for Interpreting Epistles

1. First distinguish between the central core of the message of the Bible and what is dependent on, or peripheral to it (*e.g., God's plan of redemption vs. "holy kiss" in 1 Cor. 16:20 or "women's head coverings" in 1 Cor. 11:2-16*)
2. Distinguish between what the New Testament itself considers inherently moral—absolute and abides in every culture—and what it does not (*sexual immorality vs. foot-washing*).
3. Where the New Testament reveals a consistent and uniform witness and where it reflects differences (*e.g., Christian love as ethical response vs. women in ministry—Phoebe as deacon in Rom. 16:1-2; Priscilla Paul's 'co-worker' in Rom. 16:3*).
4. Be alert to cultural differences between Bible and contemporary practices that aren't immediately obvious (*Rom. 13*)
5. Exercise Christian charity. **“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”**

Does the “then and there” apply in the “here and now” and How?

<p><i>Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. (1 TIMOTHY 5:23)</i></p>	<p>Is wine the cure for stomach illnesses?</p>
<p><i>Greet one another with a kiss of love. (1 PETER 5:14)</i></p> <p><i>Greek one another with a holy kiss. (ROMANS 16:16)</i></p>	<p>Should we be kissing one another to have a proper greeting?</p>
<p><i>From now on those who have wives should live as if they have none... (1 CORINTHIANS 7:29)</i></p>	<p>What about Genesis 2:23-24 where God blesses marriage as a sacred gift, or other passages where Paul affirms or praises marriage (like Ephesians 5)?</p>
<p><i>Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him... (1 CORINTHIANS 11:14)</i></p>	<p>What about the Nazarites in Numbers 6? There God commands men to never cut their hair because it represents a sacred dedication to God, like Samson. And what about the fact that we’re told in Acts 18:18 that Paul had grown out his hair in a Nazirite vow!</p>
<p><i>Women should remain silent in the churches.</i></p> <p><i>They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.... (1 CORINTHIANS 14:34)</i></p> <p><i>But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. (1 CORINTHIANS 11:5)</i></p>	<p>What about where Paul clearly assumes and approves of women leading a house church in praying and prophesying? And what about Priscilla, who was clearly a teacher in the churches of Corinth and Rome. And what about the women “speaking” in church in 1 Corinthians 11?</p>
<p><i>Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. (COLOSSIANS 3:22)</i></p>	<p>What about Galatians 3:28 and Philemon (who lives in Colosse!) where Paul says that slave and free are meaningless categories in Christ and that Christians are to recognize that slaves are actually siblings, not their slaves?</p>

Two Basic Hermeneutical Rules of Thumb for Epistles

First rule: “A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or to his or her readers.”

Second rule: “Whenever we share comparable particulars (i.e., similar specific life situations) with the first-century hearers, God’s Word to us is the same as His Word to them.”

Today's Table Group Discussion - **Epistles (NT)**

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Thank
you

Share

your

suggestions



Week 8

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



James - 50 A.D.

First Thessalonians - 52-53.

Second Thessalonians - 52-53.

Galatians - 55.

First Corinthians - 57.

Second Corinthians - 57.

Romans - 57-58.

Philippians - 62-63.

Colossians - 62-63.

Philemon - 62-63.

Ephesians - 62-63.

Luke - 63.

Acts - 64.

First Timothy - 65.

Titus - 65.

Second Timothy - 66.

Mark - 66.

Matthew - 67.

Hebrews - 67.

First Peter - 67-68.

Second Peter - 68.

Jude - 68.

Apocalypse - 68.

John - c. 85.

Epistles of John - 90-95.

Epistles At a Glance - Paul's Church Epistles

1. **Romans**—The book of Romans explains God's plan of salvation by grace, through the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. **1 Corinthians**—Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to confront and correct the young church in Corinth as it was struggling with matters of disunity, immorality, and immaturity.
3. **2 Corinthians**—This epistle is a deeply personal letter from Paul to the church in Corinth, giving great transparency into Paul's heart.
4. **Galatians**—The book of Galatians warns that we are not saved by obeying the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ, teaching us how to be free from the burden of the Law.
5. **1 Thessalonians**—Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica encourages new believers to stand firm in the face of strong persecution.
6. **2 Thessalonians**—Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica was written to clear up confusion about end times and the second coming of Christ.

Epistles At a Glance - Paul's Prison & Pastoral Epistles

1. **Ephesians**—The book of Ephesians gives practical, encouraging advice on living a life that honors God.
 2. **Philippians**—Philippians is one of Paul's most personal letters and relates the secret to Paul's contentment.
 3. **Colossians**—The book of Colossians warns believers against the dangers which threaten them.
 4. **Philemon**—Philemon, one of the shortest books in the Bible, teaches an important lesson on forgiveness as Paul deals with the issue of a runaway slave.
-
1. **1 Timothy**—The book of 1 Timothy describes Christ-centered living in the Christian church, directed to both leaders and members.
 2. **2 Timothy**—Written by Paul just before his death, 2 Timothy is a moving letter, teaching us how we can be confident even during hardship.
 3. **Titus**—The book of Titus is about choosing competent church leaders, a topic especially relevant in today's immoral, materialistic society.

Epistles At a Glance - General (non-Pauline) Epistles

1. **Hebrews**—The book of Hebrews, written by an unknown early Christian, builds a case for the superiority of Jesus Christ and Christianity.
2. **James**—James's epistle provides practical advice for Christians.
3. **1 Peter**—The book of 1 Peter offers hope to believers in times of suffering and persecution.
4. **2 Peter**—Peter's second letter contains his final words to the church: a warning against false teachers and an encouragement to press on in faith and hope.
5. **1 John**—1 John contains some of the Bible's most beautiful descriptions of God and his unfailing love.
6. **2 John**—John's second letter delivers a stern warning about ministers who deceive others.
7. **3 John**—The third epistle of John catalogs the qualities of four types of Christians we should and should not imitate.
8. **Jude**—The epistle of Jude, written by Jude who is also called Thaddeus, shows Christians the dangers of listening to false teachers, a warning that still applies to many preachers today.

Transition Words & Phrases

RESULT	EMPHASIS		ADDITION	REASON
Accordingly	Above all	Obviously	Last	Because of
As a consequence (of)	Absolutely	Of course	Moreover	For the purpose of
As a result	Chiefly	Particularly	Second	Given that
Consequently	Clearly	Positively	Similarly	Granted that
Due to	Definitely	Surprisingly	Third	In fact
For this reason	Especially	To clarify	Further	In order to
Forthwith	Even	To emphasize	Furthermore	In view of
Hence	Importantly	To repeat	In addition	Owing to
Then	In detail	Truly	Not to mention	Provided that
Therefore	In truth	Undoubtedly	As well as	Seeing that
Thereupon	Never	Unquestionably	As well as that	So that
Thus	Indeed	With attention	Apart from this	With this in mind
	Naturally	Without a doubt	In addition to this	With this intention
		It should be noted	Not only...but also	With this purpose
			In the same fashion	

Transition Words & Phrases

ILLUSTRATION	CONTRAST	COMPARISON	ORDER
<p>As an example of For example/ For instance For one thing Illustrated by In another case In the case of In this case In this situation Including Like Namely On this occasion Proof of this Specifically Such as To clarify To demonstrate To demonstrate/ To clarify To simplify</p>	<p>Alternatively As opposed to Contrarily Contrary to Conversely Despite/in spite of Differing from Even so However/Though In contrast (to) In opposition Instead Nevertheless/ Nonetheless Nor/ Notwithstanding On the other hand Rather /Unlike/Up against Whereas/ While Yet</p>	<p>Alike/ As with Both / By the same token Compare / compare(d) to (with) Correspondingly Either Equal / Equally In a similar manner In common In like manner In the same way In the spitting image of Just as / Just as...so too Just like / Likewise Most important Resembles Same as / Similar to Similarly / Still another</p>	<p>First/ firstly Second/ secondly Third/ thirdly Finally At this time Following Previously Before Subsequently Above all Lastly and most importantly Last but not least First and foremost...</p>

Transition Words & Phrases

SUMMARY	CONDITION	CONCESSION	GENERALISATION
<p>Altogether In essence As noted In short Briefly In summary In a word In the end In any event In the final analysis In brief On the whole Overall By and large Therefore To summarise To conclude To end Ultimately To end To sum up To sum up In conclusion As you can see As shown above Generally speaking All things considered Given these points As demonstrated above</p>	<p>Although this may be true As Because of Even if Given that Granted that If In that case In the event that Lest On the condition that Only if Since Then Unless When Whenever While</p>	<p>Admittedly Albeit All the same Although Although/Even though And still And yet Be that as it may Even if Even so Even though However In spite of Nevertheless Nonetheless Regardless of this Up to a point</p>	<p>As a rule Broadly speaking Commonly For the most part Generally speaking In general/ Generally In most cases Mainly More often than not Mostly Normally Often On the whole On the whole Overall Predominately Regularly Typically</p>

Transition Words & Phrases

RESTATEMENT	REFERENCE	CLARIFICATION	SPACE/ LOCATION
Alternatively Alternatively stated Expressed simply In a nutshell In other words In short In simple language In simple terms In summation Namely Otherwise stated Put differently Put in another way Reiterated Said differently Simplified Simply put That is to say To put it differently	Alternatively Alternatively stated Expressed simply In a nutshell In other words In short In simple language In simple terms In summation Namely Otherwise stated Put differently Put in another way Reiterated Said differently Simplified Simply put That is to say To put it differently	I mean In explanation In lay terms In other words In simple terms Simply put Simply stated That is to say To break it down To clearly define To explain To make plain To put it clearly To put it in another way To simplify	Across Adjacent Adjacent Around At the rear Below Beneath Near Nearby Next to On bottom On top Opposite Over Surrounding To the left Underneath

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

<p>NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY 5</p>	<p>HISTORIC FOUNDATIONS 5</p>	<p>MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN ACTS</p>
<p>DOCTRINAL EPISTLES 22</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN CHURCH EPISTLES 9</p>	<p>ROMANS I CORINTHIANS II CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS I THESSALONIANS II THESSALONIANS</p>
	<p>PASTORAL & PERSONAL EPISTLES 4</p>	<p>I TIMOTHY II TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON</p>
	<p>HEBREW CHRISTIAN EPISTLES 9</p>	<p>HEBREWS JAMES I PETER II PETER I JOHN II JOHN III JOHN JUDE REVELATION</p>

Look for Transitional Words in Epistles

1. Summarizing and/or concluding

- Finally, in conclusion, in the end, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in summation. in summary, hence, therefore, for this reason, consequently, to finish up, etc.

2. Adding Further information

- Likewise, similarly, in like manner, in the same way, also, and, as well, furthermore, moreover, in addition to, correspondingly, besides, equally, what is more, etc

3. Comparing Ideas

- In like manner, in the same way, likewise, similarly, correspondingly, equally, also, what's more, in addition to, as well, besides

4. Concession of a Point

- Absolutely, certainly, granted, obviously, of course, to be sure, undoubtedly, surely, definitely, unquestionably, indisputably, without a doubt

5. Sequence/Order

- 1) first, second, third, ...; 2) first, next, last; 3) in the beginning, toward the middle, at the end; 4) one, also, in addition to; 5) initially, after that, finally; 6) at first, subsequently, to conclude

6. Time and Order

- Afterward, before, currently, eventually, finally, immediately, in the future, in the past, later, meanwhile, for now, for the time being, instantly, right away, straight away, one day, for the moment, previous to, earlier than, at present, in the end, in due course, in the long run

Look for Transitional Words in Epistles

7. Exception and Contrast

- In spite of, on the other hand, notwithstanding, nonetheless, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet, quite the opposite, on the contrary, still, yet, despite, in the face of, in light of, in view of, with regards to, given that

8. Position/Placement

- Above, adjacent to, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there, between herein, upon which, beside, since, through, throughout, toward, before, beforehand, during, outside, in this, in the direction of, headed for, to this end

9. Placing Emphasis/Stressing Importance

- Even, in fact, in actuality, in effect, in reality, as a matter of fact, in point of fact, in truth, as it happens, in actual fact, in consequence

10. Following a Prior Idea

- Consequently, thereby, by this means, therefore, as a result, for this reason, so, thus, accordingly, hence, hence forth, and so

Quote and figure from Randolph Richards, Paul and First Century Letter Writing, p. 163.

“Paul’s letters were inordinately long. The typical papyrus letter was one papyrus sheet. In the approximately 14,000 private letters preserved from Greco-Roman antiquity, the average length was about 87 words, ranging in length from 18 to 209 words. The letters of literary masters like Cicero or Seneca were considerably longer. Nonetheless, Paul stands apart from them all.”

RANDOLPH RICHARDS, PAUL AND FIRST CENTURY LETTER WRITING, P. 163.

Figure: A comparison of letter length

AUTHOR	SHORTEST LETTER (NUMBER OF WORDS)	LONGEST LETTER (NUMBER OF WORDS)	AVERAGE LENGTH (NUMBER OF WORDS)
All extant papyrus letters (~14,000)	18	209	87
Cicero	22	2,530	295
Seneca	149	4,134	995
Paul	335	7,114	2,495

Paul, 46-48 AD
First Missionary Journey
Acts 13:4—14:28

