

## Appendix D

# Epistles

### *Following an Author's Flow of Thought*

After choosing a discrete unit of thought to be studied, an interpreter will be helped by following the author's "flow of thought" through that section, while also attending to contextual assumptions of author and original audience, which thoroughly influence the given argument.<sup>1</sup>

How do you begin this task of following the author's flow of thought? I will illustrate one way of doing so, using a brief part of Galatians: "For freedom Christ has set us free. So stand firm, and do not be constrained again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1; my translation).

The first step is to isolate the individual ideas of the passage. Doing this will help us get a sense of the flow of ideas from start to finish. We do this by identifying clauses, which are word groups that center on a verbal idea. So find the verb that organizes a group of words around it, and place each individual clause on a separate line. Step one applied to Galatians 5:1 would look like this, with three separate clauses identified:

1a For freedom Christ *has set us free*.

1b So *stand firm*,

1c and *do not be constrained* again by a yoke of slavery.<sup>2</sup>

The second step involves identifying the connecting words between clauses. Connecting words such as "and," "therefore," "but," "however," and "so" gives us a good idea of the relationships between ideas, so these are important words to highlight. Underline the connecting words between clauses (i.e., the connecting words that begin the clauses you have already isolated).

1a For freedom Christ has set us free.

1b So stand firm,

1c and do not be constrained again by a yoke of slavery.

The final step is to identify explicitly the relationships among the ideas you have separated. This identification often will involve drawing on the possible uses of the connecting words you have underlined. Sometimes, when there is no explicit connecting word between clauses, you will need to infer the relationship by trying out possible connections. In these cases, it is helpful to try out alternate connecting words to see which ones best fit the flow of thought.

- 1a For freedom Christ has set us free.
- 1b So (*result*) stand firm (*positive*),
- 1c and do not be constrained again by a yoke of slavery (*negative*).

Since “so” identifies an implication or result of what has preceded, 1b is the result of 1a. The “and” that introduces 1c may simply introduce a series between 1b and 1c (this and that). But given that there is a negation in 1c, the “and” seems to make a link in a particular kind of series, a positive and negative construction (this and not that). Our identification of these clausal relationships results in the following description of Galatians 5:1: The result of Christ setting the Galatians free is twofold; positively, it provides the incentive for standing firm in that freedom; negatively, it helps to keep them from taking on once more a yoke of slavery. The connection of this verse with the overall flow of Paul’s thought and its interpretation against its cultural backdrop will be crucial for determining Paul’s message to the Galatians.

## Overview of a Procedure for Visualizing an Epistle Text

1. Use a translation that is considered more of a formal correspondence translation (e.g., NASB, ESV, NRSV, CSB) for this part of the assignment because these translations tend to follow closely the connecting words that link clauses. We will see that conjunctions and other connecting words help us hear connections between ideas in a passage.
2. Divide the passage into clauses. Think of a clause as a group of words with a verbal idea holding them together. Try to keep just one verbal idea in each clause (although you may combine relative clauses with their preceding clause).<sup>3</sup>
3. Once you have placed each distinct clause on a separate line, identify and underline the connecting words that begin each clause. Some clauses will have no initial connecting words.
4. Moving from clause to clause through the passage, identify relationships between clauses by examining the connecting words as well as trying to hear the implicit connections between clausal ideas when no conjunction or connecting word is present. See the “Logical Connections” chart below for assistance identifying English conjunctions and their usages.
5. Keep the analysis of the entire passage on one page if possible, so that in the end you can visualize the entire argument of a passage, while also seeing the details of the analysis.

## Logical Connections

Listed below are the most common types of logical relationships between ideas or clauses in English. Typically, they are identified by the connecting word that introduces the second clause/sentence.

1	<i>and, or</i>	additional idea
2	<i>if . . . , then . . .</i>	two clauses connected together with a conditional idea

3	<i>question/answer</i>	two clauses connected together: need to rephrase into a statement
4	<i>but</i>	contrast
5	<i>but, and</i>	positive/negative: restatement of idea with its negation (“not”)
6	<i>even though, even if, although, however, nevertheless</i>	concessive (a type of contrast)
7	<i>moreover</i>	greater / more important idea
8	<i>in order that, that, for the purpose of</i>	purpose
9	<i>so that, that, as a result</i>	result
10	<i>because, since, for</i>	reason
11	<i>therefore, then, so</i>	implication
12	<i>by, by means of, with</i>	means (i.e., <i>the way</i> something is done)
13	<i>for, in that, that is</i>	explanation
14	<i>when, then, while, after, before</i>	temporal idea (relating to time)
15	<i>just as, as, even as</i>	comparison
16	<i>to restate, again</i>	restatement

## Figure D.1: Mapping 1 Corinthians 8:1–6<sup>a</sup>

8:1a Now concerning things sacrificed to idols,	[INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC]
1b we know that we all have knowledge.	
1c Knowledge makes arrogant,	CONCESSIVE TO 1A/B
1d <u>but</u> love edifies.	CONTRAST TO 1C
2a <u>If</u> anyone supposes that they know anything,	IF
2b they have not yet known as they ought to know;	THEN
3a <u>but if</u> anyone loves God,	IF
3b they are known by him.	THEN
4a <u>Therefore</u> concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols,	IMPLICATION
4b we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world,	NEGATIVE
4c and that there is no God but one.	POSITIVE
5a <u>For even if</u> there are so-called gods	CONCESSIVE TO 6
whether in heaven or on earth,	
5b <u>as</u> indeed there are many gods and many lords,	EXPLANATION TO 5A
6a <u>yet</u> for us there is but one God, the Father,	[AFFIRMATION]
6b from whom are all things	EXPLANATION OF 6A
6c <u>and</u> we exist for him;	IMPLICATION OF 6B
6d <u>and</u> for us there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,	ADDITIONAL IDEA
6e by whom are all things	MEANS
6f <u>and</u> we exist through him.	IMPLICATION OF 6E

**Summary:** *To some Corinthians claiming knowledge as an exception to abstaining from sacrificial temple meals, Paul points to the greater value of love over knowledge, while affirming the very knowledge they seem to be claiming, that there is only one God and one Lord Jesus Christ and so no reality behind idols.*

a. Adapted from NASB, 1995.

## Examples of These Procedures in Other Sources

- Guthrie, George H., and J. Scott Duvall. "How to Do Semantic Diagramming." In *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek*, 39–53. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Kaiser, Walter C. "Syntactical Analysis" and "Illustrations of Syntactical and Homiletical Analysis." In *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 87–104, 165–81. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.
- Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, esp. 45–51. Rev. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Piper, John. *Biblical Exegesis: Discovering the Original Meaning of Scripture Texts*. Minneapolis: Desiring God Ministries, 1999.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 97–124. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

1. The task of determining the author's reasoning has also been termed "arcing" (Piper), "tracing the logic" (Schreiner), and "block-diagramming" (Kaiser). For full citations and for further help with this task, see the resources listed at the end of this appendix.

2. The verbs, which tend to sit at the center of an idea, are italicized. The point is to have a complete idea on each line.

3. I do this because relative clauses (beginning with "who," "whom," or "which") routinely provide an explanation for a single word in the previous clause. So, almost by default, a relative clause separated from its previous clause will be an explanation of that previous clause.