

How to Study the Bible, 10/14/18

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Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

Signs that point the way to the truth

Introduction or preparation: *giving background or setting for events or ideas.* Authors often “drop a clue” like a good mystery writer. They do this by “setting the stage” in the opening scene, introducing the subject directly or giving a sense of direction, a “trail” the reader is to follow as in Job 1:1-5. In Nehemiah 8:1-3 the author gives an outline of the revival that follows in 8:4-18. Mark repeatedly introduces the place, people and issue in the beginning of each event he records (1:21, 32; 2:18; 3:1-2, etc.). Luke gives a detailed introduction in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2 explaining his reason for writing and the content.

General to specific: *movement from the general to the specific.* Authors often begin by making a general statement followed by a list of specifics. **For example,** Jesus begins by saying, “*Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them;*” and follows it up with three specific examples: *giving, praying, and fasting* and repeated reference to *hypocrites and rewards* (Matthew 6:1-18). Genesis one describes the creation of all things including man; chapter two focuses in detail on the creation of man.

Cause and effect: *progression from cause to effect and effect to cause.* Authors frequently give us both the “what?” and the “why?” This cause and effect element is evident in the prophets and in the epistles. However, it is just as important though more subtle and indirect in narrative literature. **For example,** In Romans 1:18-32 Paul has three cause/effect passages, “*they exchanged ... therefore God gave them up.*” The Old Testament prophets used cause/effect often to show that Israel was to be judged for covenant disobedience, Amos 2:4-8; 3:1-10. It is often introduced with the connectors, “*therefore*” and “*because.*” In narrative literature it appears indirectly but ties together events and characters to show that actions have consequences such as the cycle of sin followed by oppression in Judges (3:12; 4:1-2, etc.), David’s sin/troubles, 2 Samuel 11 ff.; Matthew 23:12, *humbles-exalted.*

Interrogation: *the use of a question or problem followed by its answer.* Jesus used this method frequently in His discourses as in the series of questions in Matthew 6:25-31 that precede his positive statement about the Father’s care in 6:32-34. In Romans Paul repeatedly asks a question that exposes the problem and then gives his answer or resolution. **For example,** *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?* Romans 3:1 (also 3:9; 4:1, 9, 10; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13).

Explanation or analysis: *the presentation of an idea followed by its interpretation.* When the idea or event is hard to interpret or may be interpreted incorrectly the author may include an explanation. In Matthew 6:32 Jesus explained why we do not need to worry about “these things.” Jesus explained the parables of the soils and the tares privately to the disciples in Matthew 13. John explains Jesus’ statement that the “temple” would be raised in three days as a reference to the resurrection of His body (John 2:21).

Let's practice on Ruth 1:1-5

1. What is the setting (who? what? when? where?) for the book of Ruth?
2. What is emphasized in the introduction to the book of Ruth?
3. How does the introduction prepare us for the story that follows?

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women *as* wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.