



GRASPING GOD'S WORD

A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible

Grasping God's Word

The Goal of Observation

- We read the text over and over, noting the details of the text. There are several basic features to look for which include;
 - repetition of words, contrasts, Comparisons, Lists, cause and effects, figures of speech, Conjunctions, Verbs, pronouns
- **Things to look for in Paragraphs**
 - **General Statements – that is an overview or summary of the main idea**
 - I love Ice Cream, I love Cake, I love Little Debbie's
 - **Specific Statements – the supporting details that make the general idea true or explain it more frequently**
 - I love Brushy Mountain Mud Pie, Pound Cake and Christmas Tree Cakes

Grasping God's Word

How to read the Book – Discourses

- Discourse refers to units of connected text that are longer than paragraphs
 - Other terms – story, pericope, episode, unit of thought, chapter
 - A discourse can be a smaller episode within a story or it can be the longer story itself
 - (David and Goliath) or (the David narratives)
 - Two related paragraphs in one of Paul's letters
 - Basically, the goal is to help us tackle longer units of the biblical text
- The Bible is a story!
 - Themes are intertwined, numerous markers and connections tie paragraphs together

Grasping God's Word

- Repetition of words
- Contrasts
- Comparisons
- Lists
- Cause and effect
- Figures of speech
- Conjunctions
- Verbs
- Pronouns
- Questions and answers
- Dialogue
- Means
- Purpose/result statements
- General to specific and specific to general
- Conditional clauses
- Actions/roles of God
- Actions/roles of people
- Emotional terms
- Tone of the passage

Grasping God's Word

- **Things to look for in Discourses**
 - **Connections between Paragraphs and Episodes – it is important to ask how your paragraph (in the letters) or your episode (in the narratives) relates to and connects with other paragraphs/episodes that come before and after the one you are observing**
 - **Look for....**
 - **Connections**
 - **Repeated words or repeated themes**
 - **Logical connections like cause and effect**
 - **Conjunctions between paragraphs**
 - **In narrative episodes make note of time sequence**
 - **Example Mark 8:22-26, 14-21, 27-30**

Grasping God's Word

- Things to look for in Discourses
 - Story Shifts – Major Breaks and Pivots – look for where the stories take a turn,
 - In the letters this takes the form of a **major break**
 - Shifting from doctrinal discussion to practical discussion
 - Ephesians is a great example
 - A sign to look for is a change in the verbs
 - Explanatory or descriptive verbs
 - Imperative verbs
 - In the narrative they usually take the form of a **pivot episode**.
 - The shift will happen with an unusual significant episode.
 - 2 Samuel Great example
 - 1-10 David is rolling
 - 13-24 Everything goes wrong
 - The Pivot is 11-12 Sin Enters

Grasping God's Word

- **Things to look for in Discourses**
 - Interchange – used primarily in narrative, that involves contrasting or comparing two stories at the same time as part of the overall story development.
 - the narrative will move back and forth from one story to the other
 - 1 Samuel
 - Interchange between Eli and Hannah
 - Acts
 - Luke goes between Peter and Paul

Grasping God's Word

- **Things to look for in Discourses**

- Chiasm – is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated *in reverse order*. The result is a “mirror” effect as the ideas are “reflected” back in a passage. Each idea is connected to its “reflection” by a repeated word, often in a related form.
- The structure of a chiasm is usually expressed through a series of letters, each letter representing a new idea. For example, the structure ABBA refers to two ideas (A and B) repeated in reverse order (B and A). Often, a chiasm includes another idea in the middle of the repetition: ABXBA. In this structure, the two ideas (A and B) are repeated in reverse order, but a third idea is inserted before the repetition (X). By virtue of its position, the insertion is emphasized.
 - “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”
 - “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”
 - Mark 2:27
 - Joel 3:17-21

Grasping God's Word

- **Things to look for in Discourses**
 - Inclusio - literary framing device that repeats a keyword, phrase, similar groups of words, or themes at the beginning and end of a section of text.
 - The repeated language forms a bracket, like bookends; or a pocket of thought, like an envelope.
 - Inclusio is sometimes called bracketing.
 - Psalm 8
 - Psalm 118
 - Ecclesiastes

**NEXT WEEK
CONTEXTS – NOW AND THEN**

