

CHAPTER 13

Fine-Tuning Phrasing



In Week 2 we learned the basics of phrasing. Let's review! The purpose of phrasing is to identify the beginning and end of the passage, divide it into manageable sections if necessary, find the main point(s) of each section, and then see how the remaining phrases relate to that main point.

I found in class that one week is not enough time to become comfortable with phrasing, so we are going to do some more phrasing, this time with the letter of Jude. This is a harder book to phrase, but if you can get through Jude, you can deal with most of the New Testament.

I also want to help you get a little more specific in seeing how the phrases actually are related to each other. In other words, what we will do is discover the specific nature of that relationship. For example, "Jesus came in order to save sinners." "Jesus came" is the main clause and "in order to save sinners" tells us what? It tells us the *purpose* of Jesus' coming.

Here is another example that is less obvious. Paul writes to the Romans, in 12:3-5,

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (ESV)

What is the relationship between v 3 and vv 4-5? Some translations don't start v 4 with the word "for," but the ESV has correctly translated the initial γάρ. "For" tells you that vv 4-6 are not a new topic but are giving you the *reason* for v 3. We should not be prideful *because*, despite the diversity of gifts in the church, we are one body in Christ and members one of another.

What we are going to do this week is help you slow down, look at

the phrases, and make the decisions as to the actual relationships of the phrases.

By the way, remember that one of our goals in this text is for you to be able to read good commentaries. Specifying the precise relationship between ideas is at the heart of an exegetical commentary. We will conclude our discussion of how to read commentaries in chapter 29.

Jude

I have listed the NIV text of Jude on the next two pages without paragraphs and headings. Make a copy of the pages and work from it, not your Bible.

Step 1: Find the Beginning and the End

Because we want to phrase all of Jude, this step is done for us. We are going to work with all its 25 verses.

Step 2: Identify the Sections

Work through Jude and discover how many basic sections it has. Place headings with each. My work is on page 114, so don't look ahead until you are done.



It would seem obvious what these signs are giving directions to.

Jude

- 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,
To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:
- 1:2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.
- 1:3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.
- 1:4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.
- 1:5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.
- 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.
- 1:7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.
- 1:8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.
- 1:9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”
- 1:10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.
- 1:11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.

- 1:12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.
- 1:13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.
- 1:14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
- 1:15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
- 1:16 These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.
- 1:17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.
- 1:18 They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”
- 1:19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.
- 1:20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.
- 1:21 Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
- 1:22 Be merciful to those who doubt;
- 1:23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.
- 1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—
- 1:25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Salutation

- 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,
To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father
and kept by Jesus Christ:
- 1:2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Occasion for Writing

- 1:3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the
salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for
the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.
- 1:4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago
have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who
change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny
Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Description and Condemnation of the Troublemakers

- 1:5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the
Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those
who did not believe.
-
- 1:19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural
instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Call to Perseverance

- 1:20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith
and pray in the Holy Spirit.
- 1:21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our
Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
- 1:22 Be merciful to those who doubt;
- 1:23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy,
mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted
flesh.

Doxology

- 1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you
before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—
- 1:25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever-
more! Amen.

So how did we do? I see five basic sections. The salutation and doxology are pretty evident, I think. Vv 3-4 tell us why Jude wrote and introduces us to the troublemakers.

The heart of the letter is vv 5-23, but there is a shift between v 19 and v 20 as Jude moves from describing the troublemakers to encouraging the church to persevere. In other words, there is a shift of audience and a shift in his basic message.

Some people don't split it this way. Some see a shift at 1:17, especially because of the beginning "Dear friends." That's okay. I may not be right. But when I break a passage into its sections, what I am looking for is a unifying theme, something that holds the verses together. In vv 5-23 I see Jude doing the same thing: whether he is describing people or explicitly judging them, all of it functions as a condemnation of sin, asserting that God always punishes evil.

Steps 3-4

Go ahead and phase the salutation. It has similarities to 1-Peter 1:1-2 and shouldn't give you a problem. Also phrase vv 3-4. Pay special attention to why Jude says they are godless.

When you are done, check my work on the next page.



A sign of a church. Can you spot any variances from the transliteration scheme you were instructed in this book?

Salutation

1:1 Jude,
 a servant of Jesus Christ and
 a brother of James,
 To those
 who have been called,
 who are loved by God the Father and
 kept by Jesus Christ:
 1:2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Occasion for Writing

1:3 Dear friends,
 although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation
 we share,

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith

that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

1:4 For
 certain men ... have secretly slipped in among you.
 whose condemnation was written about long ago
 They are godless men,
 who change the grace of our God into
 a license for immorality and
 deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign
 and Lord.

We have the usual threefold salutation, with Jude emphasizing that those who have been called are loved and kept both by God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Jude then moves into the occasion for writing. He had wanted to write a different type of letter, one about the salvation he shares with the church; but instead, because of the troublemakers, he felt the need to write them to contend, to fight, for the faith. Why? Because certain godless men had snuck into the church, and their heresy was twofold. They taught that holiness didn't matter, that God's grace gave them license to live immoral lives. Second, they denied that Jesus was the believer's only Sovereign and Lord.

I connected the "for" in v 4 back to "felt," precisely identifying v 4 as the *reason* for why Jude felt this way. Without the line, it may not have been visually clear that "For" is indented under "felt."

Notice the use of ellipsis in v 4: "certain men ... have secretly slipped in." While I prefer to keep the word order of the translation, sometimes it is not possible. The phrase, "whose condemnation was written about long ago," separates the subject "men" from its verb "slipped in" and is parallel with the following, "they are godless men." So I pulled the phrase out, marked its place with an ellipsis, and placed it under "men."

Notice also what I did with the last two statements. They were too long to fit on one line, so I put extra space between the two. Without that space, you might think there were four phrases modifying "men."



A picture of the ruins of Acropolis, towering over the city of Athens.

Description and Condemnation of the Troublemakers

- 1:5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.
- 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.
- 1:7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.
- 1:8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.
- 1:9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”
- 1:10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.
- 1:11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.
- 1:12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.
- 1:13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.
- 1:14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
- 1:15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
- 1:16 These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.
- 1:17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.
- 1:18 They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”
- 1:19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Repeat of Steps 1 and 2

But now what are we going to go with vv 5-19? We have seen that Jude is describing the troublemakers and condemning them, and he is also talking about other people who got in trouble. But vv 5-19 are probably too many verses to handle at one time, so what is a “phraser” to do?

Basically, we treat the section (vv 5-19) as a new passage, and repeat Step 2 by dividing the section into its subsections. Read and reread vv 5-19 until the Bible tells you where the natural breaks are. Go ahead and do it now, and be sure to write a heading for each subsection. (Write the subsection headings in some form that differentiates them from the main section headings.) Then do Steps 3 and 4 for each subsection. My work is on the next few pages.



This is a lectionary from the thirteenth to fourteenth century (see pg. 254), containing parts of Matthew and John. Photo provided by the Center for the Study of the New Testament manuscripts (Dan Wallace, director) and used by permission of Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung.

Three Parallels

1:5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that

{1} the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt,
but later destroyed those who did not believe.

1:6 And

{2} the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but
abandoned their own home
—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains
for judgment on the great Day.

1:7 In a similar way,

{3} Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave them-
selves up to sexual immorality and perversion.

They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment
of eternal fire.

I see six subsections. I could be wrong, but that is how the passage divides to my way of thinking.

(1) Vv 5-7 spell out *three situations* that parallel the situation Jude is addressing: people delivered from Egypt; angels; Sodom and Gomorrah. The parallelism is that these three groups represent that fact that God always punishes sin. The first two groups are especially privileged people, and even they were punished. The implication is that these “certain men” in Jude’s time will likewise be punished for their sins.

Notice that I numbered the three points. As I said last week, whenever I want to add something in my phrasing to the biblical text, I use curly brackets so I never confuse my scribblings with God’s Word.

I could have broken v 6b into two parts, showing that the angels {1} have been kept in darkness and {2} are bound with everlasting chains. But I divided it up the way I did because I like to see the symmetry of three groups of beings who each experienced punishment: the Israelites were destroyed; the angels are bound in darkness; the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished with fire.



For large Greek cities, roadsigns have Greek and English. If you want to go to smaller localities, you will need to know how to read Greek.

Description of the Troublemakers

1:8 In the very same way,
these dreamers

- {1} pollute their own bodies,
- {2} reject authority and
- {3} slander celestial beings.

1:9 But even the archangel Michael, ->
when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses,
-> did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against
him,
but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

1:10 Yet these men
{4} speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and
{5} what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.

(2) In vv 8-10 we see Jude doing two things. First, he is describing the troublemakers, the “dreamers,” and emphasizing how bad they are. In v 8 he gives three characteristics, and two more in v 10. But what is v 9 about?

As you worked on your phrasing, hopefully you saw that v 9 goes with the third description of the dreamers. They “slander celestial beings” (v 8), but even the archangel Michael wouldn’t slander Satan but simply said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Don’t go looking for this story in your Bible.)

Notice my use of space (e.g., between v 8 and v 9) to group different ideas. Notice also how underlining the most essential elements of the discussion help you focus on the basics of the passage and not become lost in the details.

In v 9 the subject (“Michael”) and the main verb (“did not dare”) are separated by the temporal clause (“when ...”). The arrows (“->”) are my way of hooking “Michael did not dare” together.



It is probably a good thing both Greek and English are written here. The Greek phrase literally reads, “Do not come near.”

Statement of Judgment

1:11 Woe to them!

- {1} They have taken the way of Cain;
- {2} they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error;
- {3} they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

1:12 {4} These men are blemishes at your love feasts,
 eating with you without the slightest qualm
 —shepherds who feed only themselves.

- {5} They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind;
- {6} autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.

1:13 {7} They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame;
 {8} wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved
 forever.

Prophecies

1:14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men:
 "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his
 holy ones

1:15 to judge everyone, and
 to convict all the ungodly
 of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly
 way, and
 of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken
 against him."

Continued Descriptions

1:16 {1} These men are grumblers and faultfinders;
 {2} they follow their own evil desires;
 {3} they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own
 advantage.

(3) The third subsection moves into Jude's statements of woe, his statement of judgment on these dreamers. Again, notice the numbering of the series.

(4) Jude continues by pointing out that Enoch prophesied about these men. Enoch didn't prophesy that these specific men would come, but that the Lord would judge all the ungodly for what they said and did.

(5) In v 16 Jude resumes his description of the dreamers. If you wanted to connect them back to vv 11-13, you could continue the numbering with {9}, {10}, and {11}. However, you may have noticed that Jude likes series of three, so I left them {1}, {2}, and {3}.



The entrance to an archaeological site of ancient Corinth.

Prophecies

- 1:17 But, dear friends,
remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.
- 1:18 They said to you,
“In the last times there will be scoffers
who will follow their own
ungodly desires.”
- 1:19 These are the men who divide you,
who follow mere natural instincts and
do not have the Spirit.

(6) In the sixth subsection, Jude refers to the prophecies of the apostles, that evil people will come in the last days; the dreamers are the fulfillment of those prophecies. What is important to note, in all these descriptions, is that Jude is also condemning them, and that note of judgment is what ties vv 5-19 together.

Some people see a major break at v 17, which starts with what appears to be a transitional phrase (“But, dear friends”) and which addresses the church directly. It is good to have a sensitivity to this type of change. However, because the overall thrust of this subsection is once again to describe the dreamers as evil people and so continue the judgment theme, I prefer to keep vv 17-19 with the preceding and not start a new subsection.

How do my subsections compare to yours? How about our headings? If you found a different structure, you may want to go back and reread the passage. But again let me stress that the point here is for *you* to study *your* own Bible and to let the Bible and the Holy Spirit talk to you about what it is saying.

Okay, we are almost done. Phrase vv 20-25 (below) and then turn the page.

Vv 20-23 are a call to perseverance in face of the opposition from the dreamers. This is the point to which Jude has been heading. He is not

Call to Perseverance

1:20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

1:21 Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

1:22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

1:23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Doxology

1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

1:25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!

Call to Perseverance

- 1:20 But you, dear friends,
 {1} build yourselves up in your most holy faith and
 {2} pray in the Holy Spirit.
- 1:21 {3} Keep yourselves in God's love
 as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to
 eternal life.
- 1:22 {4} Be merciful to those who doubt;
- 1:23 {5} snatch others from the fire and save them;
 {6} to others show mercy, mixed with fear
 {7}—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Doxology

- 1:24 To him
 who is able to keep you from falling and
 to present you before his glorious presence
 without fault and with great joy—
- 1:25 to the only God our Savior
 be glory, majesty, power and authority,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 before all ages, now and forevermore!
 Amen.

describing them just to condemn them; he wants his “dear friends” to see that the dreamers are evil people and to stand firm in the face of their opposition.

Vv 24-25 end with a glorious doxology. Did you notice the themes in the doxology that were introduced in the first two verses? These themes of God’s protection and the person of Jesus Christ serve as theological book-ends to Jude’s call for perseverance.

Let me again stress that while phrasing is not grammatical diagramming, noticing conjunctions and dependent clauses goes a long way in helping us see the author’s flow of thought.

Do you see what just happened? You took twenty-five verses that perhaps were not the easiest to understand, you discovered their main points, you identified several other assertions, and you can see how they all relate to the main points. Welcome to the heart of Bible study!

You figure out what works for you. That’s the point. There isn’t always a right and wrong way to do this process. You can take this basic process and mold and shape it until it works for you, until you find a way that helps you see most clearly what the Bible is saying. And what works for me may not work for you. But take the time, experiment, and let the Bible teach you what it says and means.

One last point. One of the purposes of this text is to help you be able to read the better commentaries. The kind of work we have been doing here is also the kind of work you will see being done in the better commentaries. Perhaps the authors will not be as deliberate and obvious as I have been, but this is precisely the type of work that underlies a good commentary. When we conclude our discussion of how to understand commentaries in chapter 24, this phrasing will prove itself invaluable.

Colossians 1:1-18

- 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
- 1:2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.
- 1:3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
- 1:4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,
- 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,
- 1:6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,
- 1:7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf
- 1:8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.
- 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
- 1:10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
- 1:11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,
- 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
- 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
- 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning ...

Advanced Phrasing: Terminology for the Relationships

It is time to take the final step in phrasing, and that is to specify the precise relationship between phrases. This is a little advanced, so it may not be for everyone. One of my favorite passages in the New Testament is Paul's prayer for the Colossians, especially verse 9. Go ahead and completely phrase the prayer. Please use the ESV to the left. I am sure you know the steps by now:

1. Find the beginning and end of the passage, in this case, the prayer.
2. Divide it into sections and include headings.
3. Break it into phrases.
4. Indicate the main phrases and the subordinate phrases.

My work is on page 132.

Colossians 1:9-14

- 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
- 1:10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
- 1:11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,
- 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
- 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

It looks as if the prayer goes from v 9 through v 14. Paul begins by telling the Colossian church that he has not ceased praying for them, specifying the content of that prayer and adding something more about God’s knowledge. He then moves on to the purpose of being filled with the knowledge of God’s will. He wants them to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, and he wants them to be strengthened by God’s might for their own endurance and patience. I moved “giving thanks” (v 12) back to the left because it looks like the phrase is telling us another major point about Paul’s prayer.

In typical fashion (for Paul), his mention of the Father leads him to praise him for two things he has done, and mention of the Son leads Paul to tell us one final point about Jesus, namely, that in him we have redemption, and redemption is the forgiveness of our sins.

There is much more that we could talk about and is reflected in the phrasing, but I want to move on to the next and final stage. Let’s start with an easy question. What is the relationship between “pray” (v 9) and the phrase “asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will”? Right! The latter tells us the *content* of the prayer. What is the relationship between “filling” and the following “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”? The latter tells us the *manner* in which they are to be filled.

What word does the opening phrase in v 10 refer back to, and what is its precise relationship to that word? It goes back to “pray” (we could have drawn a line if that had been helpful), and it tells us the *purpose* of the prayer. Paul did not want the Colossians simply to know about God and not have that knowledge affect their lives (as if a true knowledge of God doesn’t always motivate one toward godly living—but I digress).

These terms that I am using—*content*, *manner*, *purpose*—specify the precise relationship between phrases.

The question then becomes, how do we use our phrasing to specify this precise relationship? A common recommendation is to draw brackets to the left of the verses and label them. Something like this:

Content	we have not ceased to pray for you,	
		asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will

The *content* of Paul’s prayer was that the Colossians be filled with knowl-

9a	And so,
b	from the day we heard,
c	we have not ceased to pray for you,
d	asking that you may be filled
e	with the knowledge of his will
f	in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
10a	so as to walk
b	in a manner worthy of the Lord,
c	fully pleasing to him,
d	bearing fruit in every good work and
e	increasing in the knowledge of God.
11a	May you be strengthened
b	with all power,
c	according to his glorious might,
d	for all endurance and patience with joy,
12a	giving thanks to the Father,
b	who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
13a	He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and
b	transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
14	in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

edge.

What about the opening phrase in v 10?

Purpose we have not ceased to pray for you,

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord

The *purpose* of prayer is to walk worthily. You get the idea.

Another method is to run a column down the left side of the page showing these connections, as I have done on page 134. You could also specify the relationships by using curly brackets like this:

 {concession} although I was very eager ...

 {main} I felt I had to write ... faith

 {explanation} that was once for all ...

This process can go on and on, to any degree of detail that you wish. At some point the process becomes exhausting, but I would encourage you to always be deliberate as to the precise relationships among the main phrases.

Just imagine a Bible study in which the leader says something like this. From the first day that Paul heard the gospel had spread to Colossae, he has not stopped praying for them. Specifically, Paul has been praying that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will. Paul wants them to know God, and know God's will for their lives; but this knowledge specifically includes both spiritual wisdom and understanding; it is more than head knowledge. But it is not enough just to know God. Paul insists that their knowledge of him leads on to right behavior, that their daily walk be worthy of the Lord. What does a worthy walk look like? It is one that is pleasing to God, bears fruit in good works, and comes full circle to help them understand more of God. But Paul also wants them to be strengthened, a strengthening by God's glorious might (and not their own), a strengthening necessary for their lives to be characterized by endurance and joyful patience (in the face of suffering), all the while thanking the Father who has made it possible for the Colossians to share in their inheritance. Paul concludes with two sets of theological affirmations. He is giving thanks to the Father because of what God has done; specifically, he has saved them from darkness and into the kingdom of his Son. And Jesus, his Son, is the source of their redemption; specifically, he is the source of forgiveness.

This is the type of specificity and cohesiveness with which you can understand and present the Bible, if you can learn to see the author's flow of thought and main points.

Exercise

Go through Jude and identify at least ten different relationships between phrases. For example, in Jude 1:1 you have the main thought (“I felt I had to write ...”) with two modifying thoughts (“Although I was...”; “that was once ...”). The first is a statement of “concession” and the second is an “explanation.” Write these words down the left column.

Types of Phrases

The following is only for students who want to go even further into phrasing. Much of the discussion in commentaries is concerned with the precise nature of the relationships between phrases, and the writer will use a label to describe the relationship such as “manner” or “temporal.”

If you come up with your own labels for the connections between the major phrases, you will be doing well. But sometimes it is difficult to come up with the right terminology, so here are some suggestions. They have been taken (with permission) from a textbook written by some good friends of mine, George Guthrie and Scott Duvall. If you want to know more about the use of brackets, see their book *Biblical Greek Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1998). The following verses are from the ESV unless otherwise noted. Many of the terms listed below are the technical terms used in the better commentaries

Foundational Expressions

Many of the main phrases you come across can be categorized in one of these “foundational” categories.

1. **Assertion.** Making a statement.

John 15:1. I am the true vine.

2. **Event/Action.** Something that happened.

1 John 1:2. The life was made manifest.

3. **Rhetorical question.** A question used to make a declaration.

Heb 1:5. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son?”

4. **Desire** (wish/hope). Expression of a wish or hope.

3 John 1:14. I hope to see you soon.

5. **Exclamation.**

Rom 7:24. Wretched man that I am!

6. **Exhortation** (command/encouragement).

Mark 8:33. "Get behind me, Satan!"

7. **Warning.**

Heb 10:26. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

8. **Promise.**

Heb 13:5. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

9. **Problem/Resolution.** The stating of a problem followed by its resolution.

Eph 2:1-5. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.... But God ... made us alive together with Christ.

10. **Entreaty.** A polite request made to a superior.

Matt 6:11. Give us this day our daily bread.

Modifications

These are different ways to modify the main assertion.

Temporal

1. **Time.** A simple statement of the time an event, action, or state occurred. It answers the question, "When did this occur?"

Acts 13:3. Then *after fasting and praying* they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

2. **Simultaneous.** Two or more events or states expressed as happening at the same time.

Rom 8:10. But if Christ is in you, although your *bodies are dead* because of sin, your *spirits are alive* because of righteousness.

3. **Sequence.** Two or more events expressed as happening one after the other.

1 Cor 15:5. He appeared to Cephas, *then* to the twelve.

4. **Progression.** Same as "sequence," but the emphasis is placed on the developmental nature of the actions.

John 15:6. If a man does not abide in me, he *is cast forth* as a branch and withers; and the branches are *gathered, thrown* into the fire and *burned*.

Location

5. **Place.** Where the event, action, or state occurred. Answers the question, “Where?”

Acts 17:1. Now when they had passed *through Amphipolis and Apollonia*, they came *to Thessalonica*, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

6. **Sphere.** The domain or realm of existence.

Rom 8:9. But you are not in the flesh, you are *in the Spirit*, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

7. **Source.** The point of origin. Answers the question, “From where?”

2 Cor 4:7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power *belongs to God* and not to us.

8. **Separation.** Creating distance between two parties.

Matt 6:13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us *from evil*.

Adverbial

9. **Measure.** Answers the question, “How long?” “How many?” or, “How far?”

Matt 20:6. Why do you stand here idle *all day*?

10. **Circumstance.** Situations surrounding events or actions.

1 Thess 5:18. Give thanks *in all circumstances*.

11. **Cause.** An event or state that produces some result. Answers the question, “What brought this about?”

Rom 5:1a. *Since we have been justified by faith*, we have peace with God.

12. **Result.** An outcome of some action or attitude.

Rom 5:1b. Since we have been justified by faith, *we have peace with God*.

13. **Purpose.** An outcome that one intends to take place. Answers the question, “What did he wish to occur?”

John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, *that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*.

14. **Means.** The tool or instrument used in carrying out an action. Answers the question, “How did he do that?”

1 Cor. 15:10. But *by the grace of God* I am what I am.

15. **Manner.** How the instrument is used. Answers the question, "In what way did he do this?"

Phil 1:18. Only that *in every way*, whether *in pretense* or *in truth*, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

16. **Agency.** The personal agent who performs the action. Answers the question, "By whom?" or, "Through whom?"

Rom 5:1. We have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

17. **Reference.** An expression of relation. Answers the question, "With reference to whom or what?"

Eph 4:22. You were taught, *with regard to your former way of life*, to put off your old self.

18. **Advantage or Disadvantage.** For whom or against whom an action takes place.

Rom 5:7. For one will scarcely die *for a righteous person*.

Matt 23:31. Thus you witness *against yourselves* that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

19. **Association.** Expresses the idea of accompaniment.

Matt 5:41. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go *with him* two miles.

20. **Relationship.** Expresses some form of personal relationship.

Col 1:3. We always thank God, the Father *of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

21. **Possession.** Expresses ownership.

Matt 5:40. And if anyone would sue you and take *your* tunic, let him have *your* cloak as well.

Logic

22. **Basis.** The grounds upon which a statement or command is made.

Matt 5:3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

23. **Condition.** A requirement that must be fulfilled.

Jam 3:2. *If anyone does not stumble in what he says*, he is a perfect man.

24. **Inference.** The logical conclusion drawn from an idea.

Jam 3:2. *If anyone does not stumble in what he says*, *he is a perfect man*.

25. **Concession.** A reservation or qualification.

Heb 5:8. *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*

26. **Contrast.** Two conditions, ideas, or actions put together in order to point out differences.

Eph 5:17. Therefore *do not be foolish, but understand* what the will of the Lord is.

27. **Comparison.** Two conditions, ideas, or actions put together in order to point out similarities.

John 20:21. *As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*

28. **General/Specific.** When a general and a specific statement are put side-by-side to show the relationship between a broader and a particular concept, truth, or action.

Heb 5:4-5. *No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed.*

Clarification

29. **Restatement.** The same idea is expressed in a different way.

Heb 8:12. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and *I will remember their sins no more.*

30. **Description.** Functions to provide vivid detail of a person, event, state, or object.

Rev 12:3. *A great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.*

31. **Identification.** Information used to specify a person or thing. Answers the question, "Which one?"

John 3:1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees *named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*

32. **Illustration.** To elucidate by use of examples.

Heb 6:12-15. So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. *For when God made a promise to Abraham ... he swore by himself... And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.*

33. **Apposition.** A noun or participle that follows immediately another noun or participle with which it shares a common referent.

Eph 3:1. For this reason I, Paul, *a prisoner* for Christ Jesus.

34. **Explanation.** The addition of clarifying statements to a main proposition.

Matt 6:7. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, *for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

35. **Alternative** (either . . . or). When one condition, action, or place is expressed as a possible substitute for another.

Matt 6:24. Either he will hate the one and love the other, *or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*

36. **Question and answer.** I'll let you figure this one out.

Mark 8:29. And he asked them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Peter answered him, "*You are the Christ.*"

Form

37. **Introduction.** A passage that presents the opening of a discussion or narrative, such as Hebrews 1:1-4.

38. **Conclusion.** To bring to an end by way of summary or final decisive statement, such as Acts 4:32-37.

39. **List.** A number of things, normally of the same kind, mentioned one after the other.

1 Pet 1:1. To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.*

40. **Series.** The joining of equally prominent assertions or commands in a loose association.

1 Thess 5:16-18. *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*

41. **Parallel.** Two or more elements correspond verbally or conceptually.

Matt 5:13-14. You are the salt of the earth.... *You are the light of the world.*

Exercises

Go back through your phrasing of 1 Peter 1:6-12 and Colossians 1:9ff. and enter labels for each major phrase.

