Dallas Christian College Bible Department

Guidelines for Exegesis Assignments

Thesis

The Dallas Christian College Bible Department “Guidelines for Exegetical Papers and Bible-Theology Assignments” assists students regarding the proper content and structure of exegetical papers and regarding pertinent form and style matters for exegetical papers and other written assignments submitted in Dallas Christian College Bible and theology courses.

Outline

The writer of an exegesis would include here an outline of the *biblical passage*. (An outline of the paper would be included only if the instructor desires one.) Here, a table of contents of this document has been included for your convenience.

Content and Structure……………………………………………………………………………1

Special Notes on Format, Form, and Style………………………………………………………4

Matters of Format………………………………………………..………………………4

Matters of Form………………………………………………………………………….4

Matters of Style………………………………………………………………………….7

Procedures for Microsoft Word Formatting…..…………………………………………8

Bibliography…………………………………………………………………………………….13

GUIDELINES FOR EXEGETICAL PAPERS

# Content and Structure

Papers should include the following elements:

**Thesis Statement and Outline Page (1 page)**

(Do not count this page toward fulfillment of the assignment’s page length requirement.)

Place the MLA heading in the upper left hand corner of the document. This heading should include your name, the professor’s name, the course number and name, and the date of your assignment’s submission (not the due date). Do *not* include a pagination header for this page.

Present your thesis in one sentence. Then present a full outline of the passage. Indicate in parentheses which verses correspond to the main points of the outline. Include all verses in the outline.

The thesis statement lays down the controlling idea, boundaries, goals, and structure of the paper. It reflects the position to which the research has led the writer.The thesis statement announces, *in one sentence*, the “t's” of the paper: an explicit scripture reference for the *text* or passage covered in the paper; and the *treatment*, i.e., what the writer intends to demonstrate about the passage or topic. The thesis statement presented on this page should appear *in the same form* in the introduction of your paper.

## Examples

Paul provides a model for ministry in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-11 by his use of three family metaphors: gentle as a mother, brothers in labor, and exhorting as a father.

Isaiah 56:1-8 overturns the exclusions of Deuteronomy 23:1-8 in anticipation of a day when Yahweh will gather the nations to himself.

Isaiah 54:1-8 uses patriarchal, nomadic, and marital imagery to describe the spread of salvation that will follow the work of the Servant of Yahweh.

**Paper Proper**

**1. Introduction (1/2 – 1 page)**

On a new page, center the title two inches from the top of the page. Do *not* include the MLA heading in the upper left hand corner of this page or any succeeding pages. Include on this page, and on the succeeding pages of your paper, a pagination header that indicates your last name and the page number. (Page 1 should be the first page of the paper, not the thesis and outline page.)

Begin the text of the paper with a paragraph that grabs the reader’s attention. Include also in the introduction your thesis statement.

**2. Background and Context (1/2 – 1 page)**

Discuss briefly elements of historical-cultural context that the reader will need to know in order to place *the passage* in time and space. Include those things the reader *needs* to know about the text’s author, its original audience, and their world in order to understand the circumstances that surround the text. Keep this discussion concise and general, reserving extensive comments for footnotes or for those sections in the body of the paper where they are most helpful. Bear in mind that the information here is background for the whole book or passage, not that which bears more directly on specific elements within the study text itself. For example, the background and context section of your paper may identify the king who was reigning at the time of the circumstances narrated in the text, but one should reserve for later discussion any specific discussion of those actions of that king which provide specific background for particular elements within the study text.

Describe briefly also the literary context of the passage. Summarize the author’s flow of thought leading up to the text and flowing out of the text you are exegeting. Highlight those major themes in the book to which your text contributes.

**3. Discussion of the Text’s Content (5-10 pages)**

Proceed systematically through the text, explaining what it meant in its original setting. Describe how the historical-cultural background of the text illuminates its meaning. Discuss the meaning of significant words and phrases, and explain how various contextual elements clarify the meaning of the text.

As you discuss the text:

a. Order your discussion according to the major structure of the biblical text and its

major ideas rather than slavishly following a verse-by-verse structure.

b. Synthesize what you have learned from your own observation and reflection with

what you have discovered from your research sources.

c. Present evidence for assertions you make. This evidence should include logical

argumentation and explicit citation of biblical passages that confirm what you have

stated. If you quote, paraphrase, or summarize biblical content or events, make sure

you provide the reader with the appropriate scripture references, either in the sentence

structure itself or in parenthetical notes.

d. Interact critically with your sources. Summarize reasons why scholars adopt certain

conclusions and the reasons why you accept or reject their arguments.

e. Do *not* merely quote a line or verse of biblical text and then offer random comments

on that text. Instead, write natural sentences and paragraphs that flow together.

Quotations of the biblical text should arise naturally within your discussion.

f. Try to write concisely and clearly. Scholarly writing need not be complicated and

convoluted.

g. Write as if your audience is a group of students on your grade level or a step or two

above.

**4. Application (1/2 - 1 page)**

The preceding sections of the paper have dealt with the text’s *meaning* in its original context. This section is devoted to the *significance* of the text for the contemporary audience. Present practical applications of the central message of the text.

**5. Bibliography of Sources Consulted**

(Do not count these pages toward fulfillment of the assignment’s page length requirement.)

List alphabetically, in correct MLA format, the sources you used in your research. Unless instructed to do otherwise, present a bibliography of sources *consulted* rather than a bibliography of sources cited. A bibliography of sources cited includes only those sources one cited in parenthetical notes within the body of the paper. A bibliography of sources consulted includes both those sources the writer cited in parenthetical notes within the body of the paper and those he or she consulted, but did not cite within the paper. Do not include in your bibliography sources you did not actually consult. In other words, include all those sources you actually read to some extent, but do not include those sources you did not actually read.

**Special Notes on Format, Form, and Style**

One may find detailed guidelines for the exegetical paper’s form and style in the current editions of Clay Ham and Cara Snyder, “A Student’s Guide to the *MLA Handbook*” and *The MLA Handbook*. The items below address many of the more frequent issues and trouble spots that students encounter.

## Matters of Format

1. Double-space the following: between title and text; bibliography entries; block quotations.

Single-space within footnotes and endnotes, but double-space between them.

2. Leave at least one space between a period or comma and the next letter you type.

3. The thesis and outline page should *not* include the header with the student’s last name and

the page number. All other pages in the paper should. The header should be one-half inch

from the top of the page. Use the “header/footer” function included in most computer word

processing programs to create this header. Do *not* manually create each page’s header.

4. Do *not* justify the right margin. Use one-inch margins all around the page except on the first

page where the title is centered two inches from the top of the page.

5. Use one of the following typefaces: Times New Roman, Courier, New Courier, Arial,

Calibri, or Bookman Old Style. *Use only 12 point font*. Do *not* use decorative fonts.

6. Do *not* use bold or underlined text for emphasis. Use italics for emphasis.

7. Place content notes at the bottom of the page (as footnotes) or at the end of the text (as

endnotes). Number notes consecutively throughout the paper (i.e., do not have a new number

1 on each page). In general place the note number at the end of the sentence or phrase

referred to.

Matters of Form

1. MLA does *not* use footnotes or endnotes to cite sources. It uses parenthetical notes. These

brief parenthetical notes link the reader to an alphabetized bibliography at the end of the

paper. Using footnotes automatically generated by *Logos* to cite *Logos* sources is *not* correct

MLA form. Do not use them. Delete all *Logos* generated footnotes, and substitute the

appropriate MLA parenthetical note.

2. MLA uses endnotes or footnotes only to provide additional, expanded content or comment

which the writer wants to share with the reader but would be extraneous to the flow of the

paper. Use parenthetical notes footnotes or endnotes to document their sources.

3. Use parenthetical notes to cite sources, including the Bible, whether the source is quoted,

paraphrased, or summarized.

4. Even if one makes simple changes to an otherwise quoted text, one must place quotation

marks around those portions of the text that are direct quotes from the source. The general

rule of thumb is that any sequence of four or more words taken directly from the source

should be placed within quotation marks.

5. The name (or title or shortened title, when appropriate) in a parenthetical note should

correspond with the name or title under which the work is listed in the bibliography. In other

words, the name in the parenthetical note should match something on the left margin of the

bibliography.

6. In MLA style parenthetical notes, no comma, “p.,” or “pg.” appears between the author’s

name and page number.

7. Use scripture references in parenthetical notes, and not the Bible page number, when citing

biblical passages as your source. Abbreviate Bible book names only in parenthetical notes,

footnotes, or endnotes. Write out the full name of the Bible book if it appears in the

sentence. (The exception is when you are quoting a source that abbreviated the Bible book

name.) *The MLA Handbook* provides a list of acceptable biblical book abbreviations. You

need not place a period at the end of those abbreviations.

8. Use Arabic rather than Roman numerals in the names of Bible books (e.g., 2 Timothy, not

II Timothy). This standard is waived when one is quoting a source that used the Roman

numeral.

9. One may use standard abbreviations for divisions of the canon (e.g., OT, NT), for ancient

texts (e.g., MT, LXX), for modern versions or translations (e.g., CEV, NASB, NIV), or for

ancient non-biblical texts. Lists of acceptable abbreviations are available in *The SBL*

*Handbook of Style*.

10. The MLA standard is to place a period between the chapter number and verse number in a

scripture reference, but one may instead follow the traditional practice of placing a colon

between the chapter and verse numbers. The key is to be consistent.

11. Use numerals, not words, to designate specific biblical chapters and verses (e.g., Correct =

Verse 5; Chapter 3; Luke 3:5; Incorrect = Verse five; chapter 3). This does not apply to the

use of ordinal adjectives such as first, second, third, etc.

12. Essays and chapters contained in edited anthologies should be cited by the name of the

author of the essay or chapter, not the name of the collection’s editor.

13. Use the Ham and Snyder form for “Introduction or Note in a Bible” to cite study notes or

study Bible book introductions. Cite under the name of the author of the note or

introduction available from the front matter of the Bible. Parenthetical notes also should use

this author's name.

## Example

Morris, Leon. Introduction to John. *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

1985. Print.

(Morris 1588)

14. Cite signed dictionary or encyclopedia articles by the name of their authors. Cite unsigned

dictionary articles by a short title in parenthetical notes and the full title in the bibliography.

Cite each article separately. Do not merely cite the dictionary as a whole.

15. Use the Ham and Snyder form for “Article or Work in a Single-Volume Dictionary or

Commentary” for unsigned dictionary articles. Since there are no authors for these

dictionary articles, parenthetical notes should use the article title (in quotation marks) in

place of an author name. Cite each article separately. Do not merely cite the dictionary as a

whole.

Example

“Light.” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Eds. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and

Tremper Longman III. Downers Grove: IVP, 1997. Print.

(“Light” 509)

16. Use the Ham and Snyder forms for “Article or Work within a Multivolume Collection or

Series” or “Article or Work in a Single-Volume Dictionary or Commentary” to cite

commentaries in edited commentary sets like the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* or the

*Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary* in which the work of multiple writers appear in a single

volume. Cite the work under the name of the actual *author of the comments*, *not* the

editor(s) of the set. Names of authors will be available in the front matter or table of

contents.

Example

Carson, D. A. *Matthew*. *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 8. Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1981. 1-599. Print.

(Carson 323)

17. Do not confuse the title of a commentary with the title of the series of which it is a part. For

instance, Word Biblical Commentary is a title for a commentary series, *not* the individu­al

volume. (The actual title of a commentary usually has the Bible book name in it and will

appear in the title slot of a KOHA online card catalog entry for the commentary. The

name of a commentary series will appear in the Series slot of the KOHA online card catalog

entry for the commentary.) Use the Ham and Snyder forms for “Book in an Unnumbered

Series” or “Book in a Numbered Series” for commentaries unless the volume is an edited

collection of the work of several writers (e.g., *The Expositor’s Bible* series).

Example

Smith, Ralph L. *Micah-Malachi*. Waco: Word, 1984. Print. Word Biblical Commentary

32.

18. Use the Ham and Snyder form for “Article in a Multivolume Encyclopedia or Dictionary”

for Colin Brown’s *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Willem

VanGemeren’s *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*,

Harris, Archer, and Waltke’s *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, and multivolume

word study dictionaries like them. Cite articles under the name of the article author, not the

editor’s name. Use the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word or its transliteration (not its

English translation) for the article title. Cite each article separately. Do not merely cite the

dictionary as a whole.

Example

Carpenter, Eugene. “*qhl*.” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and*

*Exegesis*. Ed. Willem A. VanGemeren. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

888-892. Print.

(Carpenter 891)

19. Shorten publishers’ names in bibliographic entries by omitting articles (A, An, The) and

descriptive words (Book, House, Press, Publishers). If the publisher’s name is familiar

within the discipline and is generally abbreviated in all caps, use that abbreviation for the

publisher’s name. The following publishers may be abbreviated as follows: Baker,

Eerdmans, Fortress, Hendrickson, IVP, UBS, Word, Zondervan.

## Matters of Style

1. Italicize (not place in quotes) transliterated words or foreign language words not part of

normal English discourse.

2. Indicate by parenthetical notes, endnote, or footnote the translation(s) from which you are

quoting biblical texts.

3. Minimize or eliminate the use of second person (you, your) and first person (I, we, me, my,

our) in formal academic writing.

4. Minimize the use of the passive voice.

5. Write with complete sentences with each having a subject and main verb. Words ending in

“*–*ing” and words following “to” cannot be main verbs. Verbs in phrases beginning with if*,*

because, although, when, as soon as, whenever, even though, before, since, unless, and until

cannot be the main verbs in a sentence.

6. Make sure that the subjects and verbs in sentences agree (singular subjects with singular

verbs; plural subjects with plural verbs).

7. Make sure that pronouns agree with their antecedents and that the antecedents to all

pronouns (including “this” and “that”) are clear.

8. Eliminate statements like, “In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, it says \_\_\_.” Use instead the shorter “\_\_\_\_\_ says

\_\_\_.”

9. Eliminate unnecessary words.

## **Procedures for Microsoft Word Formatting**

For setting margins

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on File | 1. Go to Page Layout Ribbon |
| 2. Page Setup | 2. Click on Margins |
| 3. Margins | 3. Select the icon with 1 inch margins all around |
| 4. Set Top, Bottom, Left and Right for 1 inch |  |
| 5. Click OK |  |

For setting Left (not right) justification

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on Format | 1. In Page Layout ribbon menu, select Paragraph |
| 2. Paragraph | 2. Set General > Alignment > for Left |
| 3. Set Alignment to Left |  |
| 4. Click OK |  |

For double-spacing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on Format | 1. On the Home ribbon, select Paragraph |
| 2. Paragraph | 2. Set Line Spacing to Double |
| 3. Set Line Spacing to Double | 3. Click on OK |
| 4. Click OK |  |

For setting correct spacing between paragraphs

Some Microsoft Word settings create extra spaces between paragraphs after one hits the Enter key. MLA does not have allow for this extra spacing.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Go to Format | 1. On the Home tab, select the Paragraph group |
| 2. Select Paragraph | 2. Set Spacing > Before and After > for 0 pt (not Auto or anything else) |
| 3. Set Spacing > Before and After > for 0 pt (not Auto or anything else) |  |

For creating name and page header

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on View | 1. Select the Insert Tab |
| 2. Header and Footer | 2. In the Insert menu, Select Header |
| 3. When the header box appears, click on the Align Right icon in the main toolbar and then, in the header, type your name and add a space. Finally click on the Insert Page Number icon (*#*) in the Header and Footer toolbar to add the page number automatically. | 3. Select Edit Header |
| 4. Click Close | 4. Click on the Insert Alignment icon |
|  | 5. Select Right in the Alignment Tab dialogue box |
|  | 6. Type your name and add a space. |
|  | 7. Click on the Page Number icon to the left of the screen. |
|  | 8. Select Current Position, and choose Plain. |

For creating footnotes or endnotes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on Insert | 1. Go to the References tab |
| 2. Footnote | 2. Click on the Insert Footnote icon (or Insert Endnote icon, if using endnotes) |
| 3. Select your preference (Footnote or Endnote) | 3. Type in footnote or endnote text |
| 4. Select “Options” at the bottom of the “Footnote and Endnote” box | 4. Click on the Footnotes menu at the bottom of the References box, and set the following: “Location” = “Below text”; “Number format” = “1, 2, 3”; “Start at” = “1”; and “Numbering” = “Continuous” |
| 5. Set the following: “Place at” = “Beneath text”; “Number format” = “1, 2, 3”; “Start at” = “1”; and “Numbering” = “Continuous” |  |
| 6. Click OK…Close |  |

For setting 12 point font in footnotes or endnotes and formatting notes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Click on Format | 1. As you begin typing the text of the first footnote or endnote, go to the Home tab |
| 2. Style | 2. Change the font size to 12 pt |
| 3. From the drop-down menu “Styles,” select “Footnote Text” or “Endnote Text” | 3. In the Home tab, select the Paragraph group and set Line Spacing for Double |
| 4. Click on Modify…Format…Font | 4. Also within the Paragraph menu, set “Special” for “First Line” and “By” for 0.5” |
| 5. Change font size to 12 point…Click OK | 5. Click OK |
| 6. Click on Format…Paragraph |  |
| 7. Select Double for Line Spacing |  |
| 8. From the drop-down menu “Special,” select “First Line” and set “By” for 0.5” |  |
| 9. Click OK…OK…Close |  |

For formatting the bibliography

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Set the line spacing for the file at Double (according to the instructions above) | 1. Set the line spacing for the file at Double (according to the instructions above) |
| 2. Center the words Bibliography of Sources Consulted or Works Consulted | 2. Center the words Bibliography of Sources Consulted or Works Consulted |
| 3. Hit Enter | 3. Hit Enter |
| 4. Click on the Left Align icon | 4. Select Paragraph from the Home tab menu |
| 5. Select Format > Paragraph | 5. Select “Hanging” from the “Special” drop-down menu and set “By” for 0.5” |
| 6. Select “Hanging” from the “Special” drop-down menu and set “By” for 0.5” | 6. Click on OK |
| 7. Click on OK | 7. Type each bibliographic entry, hitting “Enter” at the end of each entry. |
| 8. Type each bibliographic entry, hitting “Enter at the end of each entry. |  |

For saving and printing your paper as one document file

Because the body of the paper should have a pagination header, but the thesis and outline page should not, students often create multiple document files in order to get the correct formatting for the various sections. One can avoid this by creating the paper in sections in the process described below. One may find additional help by searching for “section breaks” in the Word Help menu or Word manuals.

### Composition

One may compose in any order the thesis and outline page, the body of the paper, and the bibliography as separate document files. Do *not* create pagination headers in any of these files.

### Assembly

Insert, in correct order, the various files into a single file.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Open the Thesis and Outline Page file | 1. Open the Thesis and Outline Page file |
| 2. At the bottom of that page, select Insert > Break | 2. At the bottom of that page, select the Insert tab |
| 3. Select Page Break | 3. Select Page Break |
| 4. On the new page, click on Insert > File | 4. On the new page, select the Insert tab, go to the Text group, and click on Object. |
| 5. Select the proper file for the body of your paper | 5. Select Text from File |
| 6. Click OK | 6. Browse the computer directories to find the appropriate file for the body of your paper. |
| 7. Repeat the process to insert the Bibliography file | 7. Repeat the process to insert the Bibliography file |

For inserting the pagination header in the body of the paper and the bibliography, but not on the thesis and outline page

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Word 2003 | In Word 2007 |
| 1. Assemble the pages of the paper as described above | 1. Assemble the pages of the paper as described above. |
| 2. Insert a *section* break at the end of the thesis and outline page: a. Click on Insert; b. Select Break; c. Choose “Next Page”; d. Click OK | 2. Insert a *section* break at the end of the thesis and outline page: a. Go to the Page Layout tab; b. Select “Breaks”; c. Choose “Section Break – Next Page” |
| 3. Click on View | 3. From the Insert tab, select Header |
| 4. Select Header and Footer > Header | 4. When the header box appears, turn off the toggle switch for “Link to Previous.” The words “Same as Previous” should *not* appear on the right below the header area. |
| 5. When the header box appears, turn off the toggle switch for “Link to Previous.” The words “Same as Previous” should *not* appear above the header box on the right. | 5. Select “Header” > “Edit Header” |
| 6. Select the “Format Page Number” icon, and then Select “Start at 1.” | 6. In the Position group, select “Insert Alignment Tab” |
| 7. Click on the “Align Right” icon in the main toolbar. | 7. Click on the “Right” radio button |
| 8. Type your name in the header box, and then click on the “Insert Page Number” icon in the header toolbar. Your name and the number 1 should appear in the header and in the header of the succeeding pages, but not on the thesis and outline page. | 8. Click on the “Page Number” icon in the Header and Footer group. Select “Format Page Numbers,” then click on the “Start at” radio button, and make sure it is set for 1. |
| 9. Click “Close” | 9. Type your name in the header box, add a space, and then click on the “Page Number” icon in the “Header and Footer” group. Select “Current Position” > Plain. Your name and the number 1 should appear in the header. The following pages should also display the pagination header, but not the thesis and outline page. |
|  | 10. Click on “Close Header and Footer” |

Bibliography of Sources Consulted

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