

Research Guide

While the study guide that corresponds to this textbook is important in allowing the beginning student to self-assess reading comprehension as well as engage certain facts that are foundational within New Testament studies, there are other kinds of experiences a student might have with this textbook. The study guide is a useful preparatory tool for students to get a grasp on what the chapter says prior to the class lecture experience. As well, it is helpful for quiz and exam preparation. However, to engage certain critical topics broached within the text at an advance level, objective questions such as those found in the study guide, cannot be expected to bear the weight of such a task. Within *Introducing the New Testament, 3rd ed.*, there are Special Articles that expand upon these critical topics that come from the chapter reading. A quick library search on any of the topics presented in these articles will immediately inform the student that there is quite a bit of scholarly input that can be explored. In fact, the abundance of journal articles, monographs, dictionaries and commentaries on a topic such as parables, for example, can be quite intimidating for the beginning New Testament student. Where does one begin? Beyond typing in a keyword and clicking search to find good research resources, how can a student learn more regardless of the limits of their starting points? The information below should guide you through that process. The sequence of the material presented is not intended to be followed exactly, however, it is a generic blueprint on how to conduct research on topics discussed within the Special Articles section of your textbook.

1. **Choose an Article of Interest:** See the list of “Special Articles” in the Table of Contents of your text (pp. 8-9).
2. **Read the Article Using the Elements and Standards of Critical Thinking:** One of the most vital approaches to conducting research with the end result of producing a quality written account of what has been learned is the technique of critical thinking. How we think, what we think about what we know and how we interpret what we know is a skill that can only be developed across a lifetime. As Drs. Linda Elder and Richard Paul¹ put it “Critical thinking is the disciplined art of ensuring that you use the best thinking you are capable of in any set of circumstances.” The sad reality is that most go through life without a well-organized system on how to think – how to process information. As such, information is processed on an emotional level, rather than an objective level. Conclusions are drawn far too quickly with close-minded bias. The end-product is a written testament of a thought life that is illogical, inconsistent and inefficient. Valuable information that has been entrusted to the mind has not responsibly processed. The completed assignment is mediocre at best. We suffer from not having a well-trained mind

¹“Becoming a Critic of your Thinking,” The Critical Thinking Community, <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/becoming-a-critic-of-your-thinking/478> (accessed September 30, 2011).

while we are given tasks in the university, and ultimately, in life that assumes that we know how to skillfully think. No wonder so many students shudder as they get to that place in the class syllabus that announces the requirement of a dreadful term paper. There is help – lots of help. Each of us can become better thinkers. The task of writing a paper no longer has to be daunting if the student is willing to invest a little time in the process. Here's how:

- a. First, find and read the article “The Art of Close Reading” Parts 1-3 located at the bottom of the page <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/college-and-university-students/799>.
 - b. Second, take a look at the “Elements of Thought” wheel (<http://www.criticalthinking.org/ctmodel/logic-model1.htm>). Review the eight elements and place your cursor over partition to explore the concept within (Purpose, Question at hand, assumptions, point of view, data/information/evidence, concepts& ideas, interpretation & inference, implications & consequences). As you read the “Special Article” take notes in the margin of the article that answer to the eight elements presented.
 - c. In order to check the information you have learned and move to the next stage where you conduct further research, check the information presented in the article with the “Intellectual Standards” presented on the same web site. Place your cursor over the nine standards. As some of the listed questions of the article you have just read. Jot down your responses.
3. **Other Resources on the New Testament:** What do others say about this subject? This “next step” question will send the students on a wonderful quest to broaden his/her scope of knowledge concerning the topic under research. Once this task is embarked, one's knowledge base will be delightfully enlarged. There is a vast library of dictionaries, commentaries, monographs and journal articles that pertain to any of the Special Articles a student might choose. The library of information that we have in any given field is continually expanding. As such, providing a bibliographic list of resources might not be the most helpful approach. Others have done this work already; three such locations are listed here. Yet, as with any list, how does one choose the best resources available? Rather than giving the student the proverbial fish, the following, I hope, will teach the student how to fish for information. The next section, “Going Deeper in Research,” I trust will provide more aid in finding the right kinds of resources at the undergraduate research level.
- a. In the students' scurry to find the right kind of book that will provide the right kind of information, do not overlook the obvious. There are solid bibliographic references in the “Other Resources on the New Testament” section, which begins on p. 462. Take a look at the bibliography within your text. This bibliography lists some of the most current thinkers in each particular field.
 - b. Go to Dr. Roy Ciampa's Resources for New Testament Exegesis at <http://www.viceregency.com> and click on “Bibliography for New Testament Exegesis.”

A helpful story on the value of patience and discipline in conducting research is found under the link “ The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz.”

- c. Also, check out Dr. Mark Goodacre’s New Testament Gateway.
<http://www.ntgateway.com/>
4. **Going Deeper in Research:** First, begin with an outline. One professor once told me, “Spend a good amount of time on your outline. Organize what you think you might want to say before you say it. Look at your outline several times, especially as you work through the following resources (See section 5 of this guide for a general outline). The books indicated below are not intended to be an exhaustive list. They are mentioned only as an example. For a standard 7-11 page paper, consult two or more dictionaries, four or more commentaries and books and two or three journals.
- a. Dictionaries: You may need to get some background on some terms and ideas presented in your article. You will need a theological dictionary to help. In this case, a regular English dictionary will not be very helpful.
 - i. Start with a Theological Dictionary that has been published or revised within the last 20 to 30 years.
 - ii. Find a smaller dictionary such as any of the books in the IVP Pocket Reference Series for quick definitions. Ex. Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling, *The Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999.
 - iii. For a more in-depth study on people, places, terms, you will need a larger volume or a multi-volume dictionary. Some are listed in your textbook. Others are listed on the viceregency web page under
 - b. Commentaries: A very helpful way to approach the task of finding the right commentary for your research is found in Dr. Brian M. Kelly’s guide (<http://www.drbrankelly.com/>). It addresses the student who wishes to conduct biblical exegesis; however, the principles also pertain generally to other kinds of research. A partial presentation of the more extensive guide follows:

Things to look for in a commentary

1. Exposition that is insightful, new and fresh, yet biblically sound.
2. Commentaries that address the complex contours of difficult biblical texts and explain them in a clear and understandable manner. I want to learn something new, not what I already know.
3. Good contextual and background study of the biblical book and texts being studied.
4. Commentaries that focus on the explaining the text and avoid endless discussions about peripheral issues.

5. Commentaries that have a uniform and easy to follow format, which presents the information in a manner which allows one to follow the author's train of thought while he/she comments on the biblical text.

a. There are commentaries that are packed with information, that are poorly formatted. One can still use them, but it will require some effort to follow the flow of the text.

6. Commentaries with thorough and informative introductions.

a. Good introductions provide an overview of the structure of the book, historical background information, and describe the theology and/or central message of the book being studied.

7. Commentaries that provide understandable grammatical and philological (word studies) discussions that shed light on the text.

a. If a commentary does not comment on the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), this is an indication that it is less concerned with the kinds of scholarly issues which are the focus of a thoroughgoing exegesis.

8. Commentaries that interact with other opinions, that present (reasonable) alternative interpretations, and deal with the tensions in the text without being unduly dogmatic.

a. If a commentary lacks footnotes or other references, this is a good indication that they are not interacting with other scholars.

9. Commentaries with thorough and current bibliographies.

a. This helps when you are looking for other resources to supplement the commentary.

b. It is also a good indication of how extensively the author has researched her or his subject.

10. Commentaries that provide some explicit or implicit insights toward contemporary application. While it is good to know what the text said, it is even better when you have some idea of how it speaks today.

11. Commentaries should be multi-volumed, ideally with a volume devoted to each of the biblical books, and each volume should be authored by a different writer.

a. One-volume commentaries have the disadvantage of being able to cover the material only superficially.

b. Commentary series in which each volume is written by the same author are limited in usefulness by the fact that no one author can be an expert on every biblical book.

12. In the case of commentaries found over the internet, it is particularly important to evaluate them critically.

- a. The webpage or link site will give you some idea of the general purpose intended for the materials found on that site.
- b. A practical question to ask of any information available on a free website is “If this is a quality source, what is it being given away free?”

II. Things to remember about commentaries

1. Just because the commentary says so does not mean it is right.
2. Compare commentaries, especially concerning controversial portions of the Scriptures.
3. Do not think that all commentaries say the same thing. If they do, that is usually a good sign that there is consensus on that particular text. You should cite them all in your paper to support your position (if you agree with them), especially if it is a controversial interpretation.
4. Remember that commentaries will reflect the theological background of the author. This will be especially evident when one reads commentaries on Acts, texts that deal with spiritual gifts, and issues such as eternal security versus falling away (Heb. 6:4-8).
5. Supplement the information in the commentary with other resources, such as journal articles, dictionary articles, and monographs.
6. Some commentaries will assume that you will utilize other resources and will not tell you everything you want to know. Some are written assuming that you know the background and other critical issues before you use their commentary.
7. Remember that not all commentaries are written for the pastor or for those seeking devotional edification. That does not mean, however, that the commentary is therefore useless. Remember that you want to start eating meat and stop drinking milk (1 Cor. 3:2).

III. Types of Commentaries

1. Devotional commentaries-Good for preaching, but not always for exegesis, although there are some really good insights in these titles and others. Old does not always mean not useful.

- a. Typically these are the opinions and insights of the author alone. There is little attempt to interact with other scholars.
- b. Little is offered in the way of argument or evidence.
- c. Illustration and example is used, rather than reason and argument.
 - 1) Matthew Henry
 - 2) Adam Clarke

2. Popular commentaries-written for the layman and beginning student-

- a. These are still valuable commentaries for exegesis-check them out.
- b. There may be more reasoning and reference to other writers.
- c. Typically these authors will still not engage in an examination of multiple points of view or an in-depth consideration of controversial points.
 - 1) Bible Speaks Today-InterVarsity Press
 - 2) Daily Study Bible by William Barclay-Westminster Press
 - 3) NIV Application Commentary-Zondervan
 - 4) Westminster Bible Companion-Westminster/John Knox Press

3. Semi-critical-written for the advanced student (that means you).

- a. These will contain footnotes or references, along with a bibliography, and will discuss the insights of other scholars.
- b. The original languages will be consulted, but will probably not be central to the exegesis.
- c. There is, as in the case of devotional and popular commentaries, still a concern about application and relevance for the reader.
 - 1) Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament-Augsburg Fortress Press
 - 2) Abingdon New Testament Commentaries-Abingdon Press
 - 3) Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament-Baker Books
 - 4) Black's New Testament Commentary-Hendrickson
 - 5) Continental Commentary Series-Augsburg Fortress Press
 - 6) Expositor's Bible Commentary-Zondervan
 - 7) Interpretation Commentary-Westminster/John Knox Press
 - 8) New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament-Eerdmans
 - 9) IVP New Testament Commentary Series-InterVarsity Press
 - 10) New Century Bible-Sheffield Academic Press
 - 11) New International Biblical Commentary-Hendrickson
 - 12) New Interpreter's Bible Commentary-Abingdon Press
 - 13) New Testament in Context-Trinity International
 - 14) New Testament Library-Westminster/John Knox Press
 - 15) Old Testament Library-Westminster/John Knox Press
 - 16) Pillar New Testament Commentary-Eerdmans
 - 17) Sacra Pagina-Liturgical Press
 - 18) Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary Series-Smyth Helwys
 - 19) Tyndale Old and New Testament Commentaries-Eerdmans
 - 20) Reading the New Testament Series-Smyth Helwys

4. Critical commentaries-written for the advanced student and scholar.

- a. Original languages will be an important part of the study.
- b. The author will assume a significant quantity of knowledge on the part of the reader, so that, for example, Greek and Hebrew words may not be translated.
- c. Citations and references to other writers will be extensive.
- d. Application and the hermeneutical step of applying the passage to a modern context are often absent.
 - 1) Anchor Bible-Doubleday

- 2) Eerdmans Critical Commentary-Eerdmans
- 3) Heremeneia-Augsburg-Fortress Press
- 4) International Critical Commentary-T&T Clark
- 5) New International Greek Commentary-Eerdmans
- 6) Word Biblical Commentary-Thomas Nelson

c. Books: Beyond dictionaries and commentaries, you will want to spend some time on theological books, monographs (books on a single topic) and dissertations. Consult the NT Gateway under your particular research topic:

<http://www.ntgateway.com/>.

d. Journal Articles and Subscriptions: No research paper is complete with a few journal articles. Information is constantly being updated and the only way to stay on top is to consult journals and subscriptions. Dictionaries, commentaries and books are foundational in teaching where the topic started, whose opinions in the field matter and where the strengths and weaknesses of past research lie. Journal articles inform where the issues are going today, who is writing in the field, and what possible new turns the topic is taking. Every good library has a gateway to academic journals.

i. Just pull up to any computer with this handy guide “Bibliographic Research in Biblical Studies.” Locate your university’s online catalog and search through any of the religion databases listed in this guide:

<http://www.viceregency.com/BibliographicResearch.htm>

ii. There are all kinds of academic journals and subscriptions out there. What journal are some quality journals that the student should give priority to?

Find them here: <http://www.ntgateway.com/tools-and-resources/journals/>.

There are also specifically recommended journals under each area of study on the site’s main page.

5. **Writing a Research Paper:** You may ask, “How do I write what I have learned?”

a. The actual requirement for a term paper depends on the professor’s requirements. A research paper that covers anywhere from 7-11 pages is standard at this level of education.

b. Refine your outline. Make sure there is a flow and cohesiveness as you move from one section of your paper to the next. Complete your outline with the research data you have. In general, there should be:

i. *An introduction*, which presents the topic and the direction your research goes. Here is where you state your thesis (what you aim to show the reader)

ii. *A background section* tells the origins of the topic, defines key words and terms that are specific to the topic that the reader will find throughout the paper. This section provides some kind of history of what is known. It

may summarize the article read and present some critical questions the student wishes to answer.

- iii. The bulk of your time will be found in *the body*. Perhaps, this section will take up the majority of the pages allotted for the paper. Do not simply copy from the commentaries, books and journals you have pulled from the library shelves. At this stage, you should be able to write your first draft rather freely. See section 7 and 9 of your Turabian Manual. Next, use quotations and paraphrases from the resources you have found to agree or disagree with you. If you have chosen a source that disagrees with you, you must have another source handy that agrees with you where you can show the validity of your view. Note that this source needs to be a strong one. It most likely should be published more recently or be referred to positively by other current scholars in the field. Be sure to properly cite your quotations and paraphrases! To not cite a paraphrase is still considered plagiarism. See Part II in the Turabian Manual for how to cite any given resource you might have.
 - iv. A *Summary and/or Conclusion* section helps bring together the body of your work in alignment with what has been written in the past in your backgrounds section. It answers the research question or thesis. It reminds the reader the importance of this topic and what has been learned from your study in very succinct statements. Here is where the last two processes of the Elements of Thought are important (Interpretation & Inferences and Implications & Consequences)
- c. Consult the Turabian Manual of Style. If you have not bought one already, this is an indispensable manual for research writing in the Religion. Some quick citation guides for the manual are found below; however, you will need the guide. Research writing is more than just knowing how to write a footnote or how to lay out your Word Document. The guide explains quite literally how to find good research sources, how to build your research argument and how to line up the elements of your research findings. It shows how to write polished sentences. It catalogues common spelling problems and how to fix them. There's a section on proper punctuation, rules on capitalization of words and a valuable guide on common abbreviations. Buy the Turabian Manual from any of the known book dealers such as Amazon, Barnes and Nobles, Borders or straight from the press at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo5059214.html>
 - d. Two recommendable online quick guides for documenting your resource are:
 - i. http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html
 - ii. <http://www.lib.uga.edu/ref/turabian2009.pdf>