



# BibleProject Podcast

## 4 Steps to Argument Tracing New Testament Letters E9

August 3, 2020, 69.00

Speakers in the audio file: Jon Collins, Tim Mackie

**Tim** Hey everybody. This is Tim at BibleProject, and welcome to the podcast. Today we are wrapping up our final conversation in our series about how to read the New Testament letters. If this is the first episode you're listening to in the series or on the podcast, welcome. We do recommend you go back and check out all the episodes leading up to this one. But if you're just going to dive in first right here, here's an introduction.

You're probably familiar with the letters of the New Testament. They're some of the most well-known books in the Bible and they're full of inspiring one-liners. These are letters that Christians often quote just single sentences from. They're actually are fairly easy to read as devotional kind of grab bags where you just read a sentence or a paragraph at a time. However, we want to invite people into a more in-depth and thoughtful way of reading these as whole letters. And part of learning how to do that means learning the literary context of any given sentence or paragraph in the flow of the letter as a whole.

So today, we're going to talk about some of the skills involved with following a train of thought from the letters beginning to its end in the New Testament. We're going to give you some tips and skills for how to read the letters more effectively, and we're going to discuss an interesting question that comes up between Jon and I about why Paul sounds so aggressive, even bombastic, and arrogant sometimes in some sections of his letters.

Paul was trained in ancient Greek and Roman style of rhetoric and public speaking. So the way that he writes is really different from how we might try and develop a line of thought in a modern Western context. We're going to explore things like that, and even more in today's episode. One thing to note is that Jon and I recorded this conversation, we were in our office. It's a little bit different than normal but we think it should be fine. Okay, thanks for joining us. Here we go.

00:00:00

00:01:00

00:02:00

**Jon** So, Tim, we're recording outside the studio.

**Tim** Yes, we are.

**Jon** *inaudible* 00:02:18

**Tim** Yeah, we did.

**Jon** So we found this field recorder and we're just in our office.

**Tim** We're in our office sitting next to each other having this conversation.

**Jon** Staring at the screen.

**Tim** Yeah, staring at the screen together. We are carrying on our conversation about how to read the New Testament letters. We did a whole series on the historical background of the letters, learning how to dive into that. This conversation is about how to actually read the New Testament letters as literary wholes from beginning to end.

**Jon** You kind of broke my brain talking about these letters being written in community.

**Tim** Yeah.

**Jon** But it's good.

**Tim** Yeah.

**Jon** There's a new appreciation for... 00:03:00

**Tim** The letters come from Paul and his team.

**Jon** And his team. And there's a pro scribe involved likely. It's just a new category but it's really helpful for me to imagine that and bring that in to what does that mean for this to be God's Word. It's easier just imagine God zapping a dude who transcribes something straight from the Holy Spirit.

**Tim** Paul's meditating and praying and a study alone.

**Jon** And he just hears the word of the Lord be like, Put it there."

**Tim** Totally.

**Jon** It makes it feel more complex. But why can't God work in that way too?

**Tim** Yeah, He clearly has. We're imagining all those scenarios from the actual data in the letters. That he names co-senders or co-authors, which is not standard in 1st century letters. Yeah, there you go. So they're the product of Paul and his missionary teams, and they're working out the content over the course of years. Then, as they travel and they're on the road and so on. 00:04:00

Where we're going to go now is a little more practical in how to, which is strategies and tools to actually read the letters and notice stuff, and learning how to identify what's important and things like that. So the first type of approach is just to understand the form of 1st century letters. I still remember learning how to...be taught how to write a letter. I was given a template. You put certain points on the page, the date up in the upper left, and a home address, your name. I remember it felt weird to me.

**Jon** Why did it feel weird?

**Tim** To put that information up at the upper left and you write your name and address. I remember being like, "Isn't my address on the envelope? Why do I need..." Stuff like that.

**Jon** Do you ever do that in letters?

**Tim** Oh, dude, I can't even remember the last time I wrote a paper letter.

00:05:00

**Jon** But have you ever opened up like a Word document and there's templates?

**Tim** Yeah, I've done those.

**Jon** There are letter template.

**Tim** You're right. I've done those.

**Jon** There's a business letter template.

**Tim** Totally. The thing is I don't create it. I just use a template that's within page...

**Jon** But all to say there's a template for how you write letter and there was a template for how you wrote letters.

**Tim** Template. Yeah, totally. So here we'll just summarize it in the most basic form. It's pretty intuitive. It's not rocket science. Ancient letters, in the centuries before, especially in around the time of the apostles, the first words is your name. And then the receiver. So this is called the opening address. You identify yourself, who you're writing to, and usually use some form of the Greek word "charis", which means "grace" or "favor" to say hello. "Grace to you." "Paul to the church in so and so. Grace to you." There you go. There's almost always some little line of giving thanks to the gods for what...

00:06:00

**Jon** After the opening address?

**Tim** After the opening, there follows the second main part of the form which is called the Thanksgiving. You give thanks to the gods. "I hear that you're in good health, I give thanks to the gods." That kind of thing. Then you get the body of the letter, and then you get the closing of the letter, which is usually saying hi to people if you want to, travel

plans, a final prayer for the well-being or health or sometimes the praise to the gods, and then whatever, PS (Postscript). So opening...

**Jon** So opening address, thanksgiving prayer, which is kind of a formality of sorts. And then you get into it, "Here's why I'm writing letter," getting all the content, and then the closing.

**Tim** That's right.

**Jon** Then what you've got here is just a chart of all the New Testament letters and how they do this. In the opening here, you've got 1, 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians. You've got all the letters. And then you got columns. And you fill them out. You got to sender column...

00:07:00

**Tim** I just copied and pasted the opening paragraph.

**Jon** Paul's the sender. And he gives himself a title usually. He doesn't in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In the next column over you called it a description. So in the opening, it's like, "Here's who I am, and let me describe why it's important who I am."

**Tim** Yeah, yeah. The most basic form would be "Paul to so and so." Actually not one of his letters begins that way. He almost always adds a description of himself. Sometimes short, sometimes long. He often names the group that produced the letter. He'll name people. So that's the first thing. He rarely puts just his name. He usually puts his name and other people's names, and he usually describes himself with long or short descriptions.

The basic point is that if you start comparing all the different beginnings of the New Testament letters, you'll notice when Paul or Peter or John is taking the existing form and tweaking or adapting it to the unique purposes of that letter. That's the basic idea. There it is.

00:08:00

**Jon** Cool. So the same thing is true for Thanksgiving. He always has some sort of thanksgiving prayer before he gets into the meat of the letter.

**Tim** Correct.

**Jon** So feel free to skip that? It's a formality?

**Tim** Okay, here's what's interesting. From here I found a helpful collection of ancient Greek and Roman letters from a collection by a scholar named John White called Light from Ancient Letters. And you just read collections of ancient letters. I don't know. Most people probably should not read. In fact, I don't know. I recommend it. Actually, I do recommend it, but it's like...You know. What's interesting is, one, we noted in our last conversation how long the New Testament letters are in comparison to all ancient other letters.

00:09:00

**Jon** Paul writes long letters

**Tim** Especially Paul and the letter to the Hebrews.

**Jon** That's a long one, too.

**Tim** They are among the longest letters from the ancient world.

**Jon** Not like long like, "Oh, yeah, this is one." It's like, well, you went twice as long as anyone else ever goes.

**Tim** Twice or three times.

**Jon** Twice or three times.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. So the Thanksgiving is like this. Usually, if you read any ancient letters, it's like writing, "dear so and so," "Dear Jon," at the beginning of the letter.

**Jon** That's the opening?

**Tim** Yeah. Like using the word "dear"...

**Jon** Oh, it's a formality?

**Tim** Yes. Do I actually mean you're so dear to me? No. I mean, you are Jon Collins. You are dear to me.

**Jon** Thank you.

**Tim** You're welcome. But you know what I'm saying

**Jon** Yeah.

**Tim** Like when you write "dear so and so," it's just a formality.

**Jon** Right.

**Tim** The Thanksgiving prayer: "Many thanks to the gods that you are healthy and well this year. I give thanks to this God because He protected me and you." It's just what you say. When you read Paul's letters, he's taken the Thanksgiving and he's turned it into a whole movement of the letter.

00:10:00

Here's another little fun homework assignment. Go through all of the New Testament letters and study the Thanksgiving prayer. What you will find, and more often than not, is all of the key themes or vocabulary that is going to be developed in the letter is introduced in that opening prayer in a really cool way. It shows that Paul especially saw the Thanksgiving prayer, first of all, as Jewish, it's just good biblical style to give thanks to God. And then you fill out your thanksgiving to God. It's like a third of the Psalms in the book of Psalms.

So what he's done is taken the Thanksgiving prayer and really filled it out as a communication tool, and to make these theologically and poetically quite beautiful.

00:11:00

**Jon** So don't skip it?

**Tim** Don't skip it. No, they're super important.

**Jon** Looking at your chart, he always has a Thanksgiving except for the book of Galatians.

**Tim** Yes, he's got no thanks.

**Jon** He's not thankful.

**Tim** No. In the place where you expect him to say "I give thanks to God for you," in Galatians 1:6, he just began, "I am stunned that you have so quickly abandoned the good news about Jesus."

**Jon** It's the opposite of giving thanks.

**Tim** Yeah, totally. So the absence of thanksgiving in the letter to the Galatians sticks out.

**Jon** All right. So we got the opening, and then Thanksgiving prayer, you could start it all see what Paul's doing with those or whoever is writing it. And then the body.

**Tim** Then you come to the body, which we'll talk about in a moment.

**Jon** Okay.

**Tim** Then the final main form or standard convection is the closing, which is actually fairly flexible, but it has common elements in it. You usually pronounced a peace benediction...

00:12:00

**Jon** Closing Thanksgiving of sorts.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. But peace be upon you and your so and so, peace on you and your animals this year, that kind of thing.

**Jon** The church would call this the benediction.

**Tim** The benediction. That's right. Yeah, that's right. So what Paul will often do is use the word "peace" but in creative ways. Like in Thessalonians he'll say, "May the God of peace bless you and make you holy, faithful as the one who called you." Other times he'll just say, like the end of the Romans, "May the God of peace crush the Satan on your feet." That kind of thing.

So with the closing, there's often a peace benediction. Or sometimes he'll boil what he wants them to do down to a really brief command called the final exhortation. There's usually greetings. "I say hi. Say hi to so and so. So and so says hi." Then sometimes he'll even identify his autograph. Like at the end of Galatians, he says, Look what large letters I'm writing with my own hand." Actually, that goes back to our scribe conversation. What Paul's saying... 00:13:00

**Jon** He grabs the pen from the scribe. He's like, "Hey, let me throw in a line."

**Tim** You can tell my handwriting because I have large, sloppy letters. That's what he's saying. Because the scribes trying to maximize space on that.

**Jon** He's got small, tight, beautiful letters. Paul comes in and he's like, "*unintelligible*." 00:13:22

**Tim** "Look at the huge letters of my name." But the point is, "I'm the one writing this to you like this?" Yeah, that's it. So that's the kind of the closing. So once again, it really pays off to compare the final chapters or paragraphs of all the letters. And you'll notice unique things that begin to mark each letter and kind of give you the unique profile of each letter. It's opening and then it's closing.

And if you do that for all the letters, you can even start to see there are things that will teach you what to look for when you turn to the body of the letter. Key words, key ideas.

**Jon** Why did he describe himself that way in the opening, and why did he pray this specific prayer and Thanksgiving? Why was this his finished final exhortations? All those things are clues to what he's doing in the body of the letter? 00:14:00

**Tim** Correct. That's right. One of the most helpful ways to study and get the main ideas of the letters is not just to follow the train of thought in the middle, but actually, pay real close attention to the beginning and the end. You'll notice things that will set you up for success reading the body. That's the basic point. That's the basic tool.

**Jon** Great.

**Tim** I think we can do that in the video in a pretty short form.

**Jon** Yeah.

**Tim** So that leaves...

**Jon** In the video, Paul could be opening up like a Word document template and filling it out?

**Tim** Yeah, totally. I feel like this could be real intuitive of just like in every culture, people learn how to write a letter in standard ways. Those ways existed in the 1st century. And then you could show what's interesting is to watch how the apostles though would adapt, tweak it. You could show the standard and then show just the basic point that we just made. 00:15:00

**Jon** Right.

**Tim** Okay, so turning then to the most difficult part of the letters then to really make sense of the body.

### **New Section**

00:16:14

**Tim** First, a quote from Randolph Richards, who quoted from already Paul in 1st century letter writing in his work. He says, "Paul's letters were inordinately long. The typical papyrus letter was one papyrus sheet in the approximately 14,000..."

**Jon** Is a papyrus sheets about 8 by 11?

**Tim** On, I think a bit smaller. I forget off the top of my head.

**Jon** I just read last week, the Wikipedia page on papyrus because that's the project we're talking about. And I learned a lot. It's this plant that grows in the flood plains of Egypt. It's from the stalk of this plant. It's like a shoot. And then you slice that up and then you got these thin pieces of strips. And then they put all the strips...

**Tim** You weave them together.

**Jon** You weave them together, and maybe smash it, and then they maybe even decompose a little bit so that they kind of stick together. Then it's dried out and then even kind of ironed out. But you can stitch together as long a sheet as you want.

**Tim** Correct. That's right.

**Jon** So there's probably some sort of typical sheet slice.

**Tim** I bet that's right. I'm sure it was standardized in the production of them. The first time I ever saw one of these it actually wasn't papyrus. It was leather parchment made of animal skin. But the Dead Sea Scrolls. And I remember being blown away how tiny they are. They're not huge. When you see pictures of them, these are all magnified. But they're like this thick. 00:17:00

**Jon** What?

**Tim** Yes.



**Jon** That's how tall they are?

**Tim** Yes.

**Jon** Your hands are about 6 inches?

**Tim** No, 8 inches

**Jon** Eight inches?

**Tim** Yeah, 8 to 12. They're not big.

**Jon** Okay. Yeah, I always imagined them like... 00:18:00

**Tim** When you see pictures of them, they look huge.

**Jon** It's because the handwriting is so small?

**Tim** Yeah. But they're tiny and the handwriting is so unbelievably tiny.

**Jon** Wow.

**Tim** Anyway.

**Jon** That's why you need a pro.

**Tim** You need a pro. It's about economics too.

**Jon** All right.

**Tim** Okay. We've only made it through two sentences. So back to Randy Richards. "The typical pirate's letter was one sheet. In the approximately 14,000 private letters preserved from Greco Roman antiquity, the average length is about 87 words, ranging in length from 18 words to 209 words. That's long. The letters of literary masters like Cicero or Seneca were considerably longer. For example, Cicero's shortest letter is 22 words. His longest letter is 2,500 words. "Nonetheless," Richard goes on, "Paul stands apart from them all. Paul, shortest letter, Philemon, is 335. His longest letter, Romans, is 7,100 words." 00:19:00

**Jon** So the average length of a letter in Greco Roman antiquity, which...what's that? That's like?

**Tim** Oh, got it. These are mostly from 3rd century BC up to like 1st or 2nd century AD.

**Jon** Okay. So there's 14,000 private letters that we have preserved, we found. The average length is 87. The longest letter in that collection is 209. But then Cicero and Seneca, they live in Greco Roman times.

**Tim** They are, yeah.

**Jon** Why aren't their letters part of that collection?

**Tim** Oh, because they are wealthy elite. Their careers are...

**Jon** They are like professional letter writers.

**Tim** ...progressed through letter writing. And they were some of the best letter writers in the ancient world, which is why their letters have been preserved.

**Jon** So you take those guys out of there and you're like, these are the elite letter writers." Cicero's average letters look like the size of the longest letter of any other ancient letters. Seneca's is like three times that. 00:20:00

**Tim** Cicero's average letter is 295 words. Seneca's average letter, 995 words. Paul's average letter, 2,495 words. I mean, like two and a half times longer than the longest letter writers of the ancient world.

**Jon** Paul has a lot to say.

**Tim** Paul has a lot to say. That's the basic point here. The body of Paul's letters are among the longest and have letters preserved from the ancient world.

**Jon** That's really interesting.

**Tim** It is.

**Jon** We talked about that before. So I'm still trying to figure out like, what's the takeaway from that? I mean, that's interesting that...

**Tim** Part of it is that Paul, among all the apostles, as N.T. Wright says, he is inventing the concept and the medium of written theology. 00:21:00

**Jon** So that's what I think I mean with pushing communication technology. It's like he's got...Yeah.

**Tim** He doesn't just retell the stories, he doesn't just quote the poetry or makes exhortations, he's developed a whole new way of philosophical theological discourse of thinking through what happened in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Jon** Seneca was doing similar stuff, and in Cicero, right? But he's like taking it to another level. He like found a fourth and fifth gear.

**Tim** What's Cicero and Seneca, for the most part, doing is mediating the traditions in which they were raised. Oh, and a lot of his posturing. A lot of its rhetoric. And it's just making friends with so and so. Career strategy. For Paul, he'll write something like the letter to the Romans to a couple of hundred people in Rome.

**Jon** Really it's for everyone.

**Tim** Think about the impact of the letter to the Romans throughout history and that the original audience is a couple of hundred people. What the majority of the letter is his theological reasoning in light of the story of the Bible and what happened with Jesus as to why they should unify together. So Paul's got a lot to say because of his unique calling and vocation. 00:22:00

**Jon** So Seneca didn't just write letters. He wrote like essays of sorts?

**Tim** Yeah. Or his letters will have short essays. I'm not an expert.

**Jon** There's 1st century letter writing. Was our 1st century essay writing?

**Tim** Oh, yeah, sure. That's often what's in these letters. This is why in the era of letter writing pretty much before email, this is why people preserve famous...

**Jon** Correspondences.

**Tim** Yeah, correspondence of famous or influential people is because often their letters will have short essays and...

**Jon** Beautiful thoughts in them.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** So these are really long bodies of letters.

**Tim** Yeah, Paul's letters, especially, but also Hebrews, and to a certain degree, 1 Peter, they're pretty long, dense bodies. So there's two things. One is learning how to follow the main themes and the flow of thought through a dense body from any time in place. But then second is when you have Messianic Jewish authors who are using Greek and Roman rhetorical styles to create that flow of thought, then that takes a little bit of adjusting too. I think those are just the two basic steps. One is just thinking like, "Hey, I'm entering another culture's way of arguing a point and..." 00:23:00

**Jon** We've talked about this before, and like there's two cultures we have to wade through to get to what Paul's doing. Because he's thinking in Hebrew and Jewish, shaped by Hebrew Bible. But then he's writing in Greek and he's using Greek rhetorical style and a Greek letter template, and we're reading it in English and thinking in English. 00:24:00

**Tim** Correct. So as with any part of the Bible, it's a cross-cultural moment to adjust. I've totally had this experience myself, and I've talked with other people, especially Paul, that he comes across pretty bombastic sometimes or just very aggressive or assertive. And it's off-putting for a lot of modern Western readers, I have found.

**Jon** I could have imagined that's his personality too if you met him.

**Tim** I think there's an element of personality...

**Jon** That I might be like, “This guy, he’s very sure of what he believes and he talks a lot.” I’m just imagining that’s how I would feel.

**Tim** Totally. But another part of it too is he was trained in the Greco Roman style of giving speeches and trained in rhetoric. If you learn the art of debate rhetoric if that’s a part of your training, and it was certainly a part of his training and a part of education back then, it was a way of presenting your thoughts to a public audience. It was a whole tradition that for the most part, Western audiences works totally...we swim in a different river altogether. 00:25:00

**Jon** I’m sure there’s still part of that in our culture. I mean, were you ever part of speech debate team?

**Tim** Oh, I never was.

**Jon** Me neither.

**Tim** But it’s a mode. It’s a mode you enter into. In fact, here’s a quote from Jerome Murphy O’Connor. Very helpful. Murphy O’Connor says, “Oratory and rhetoric are about the art of persuasion. At all times, and places the ability to win others to one’s point of view has been esteemed, and in all spheres of life, business, politics, law relationship. In the democratic societies of Greece and Rome, success in public life depended on eloquence. It was the hallmark of civilization and the characteristic of an educated person. And while some were gifted in finding the key to an audience’s heart, the majority were not. And so began the project of studying and codifying the art of persuasion in Greco Roman education.” 00:26:00

This was like a whole field that you’re trained in. It’s the equivalent of, I think, what at least the American education systems what I know of like math and science now. This was one of the standard tracks.

**Jon** Math, science, and rhetoric.

**Tim** Rhetoric—learning how to articulate your thoughts in a way that is winsome, persuasive, and gets things done. It’s an art.

**Jon** Yes. I took this really interesting class. It was at a community college. They took a philosophy class and a speech class, and they combined it.

**Tim** Oh, interesting.

**Jon** So there was the speech teacher there and the philosophy teacher there. So half the class was talking philosophy, then the other half the class was now we’re going to talk about how we would present these ideas to each other. And then you would do speeches of different types. It’s all about how do you persuade someone? 00:27:00

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** How do you give a good presentation? Still super valuable.

**Tim** Totally. I took my first speech class in college.

**Jon** And it still rules the world in terms of career. If you've ever gone on LinkedIn, it's just what people are...they're just talking either to the camera or giving little blurbs and trying to...

**Tim** You could say it's actually a universal kind of human trait. In a group of people that they get together and forms a society, the ability to communicate persuasively to get things done is super valuable.

**Jon** Super valuable.

**Tim** Some people have innate talent and confidence to be able to do it. But nobody can do it perfectly without training. I mean, you have to work at it, to practice. In the 1st century, there was a whole system. Actually, a lot Aristotle, Plato, all of them have famous essays and tracks on rhetoric and persuasion, and so on. The most famous kind of like Godfather who codified and wrote the handbook, it's still a guy named Democritus.

00:28:00

But in the Greco Roman tradition, there were three main forms that you were trained in. This was actually helpful for me, because as I've sat with the New Testament letters for many years, it's helped me kind of know what mode they're in.

The first is called deliberative, and it's essentially when you're persuading people to do something. So you'll use examples from the past, you'll project future outcomes, you're using reason, but not always logic, and not always data. You're using reason or just persuasion to get people to do something. So persuasion mode. Paul is often in this mode. When he's trying to get the Corinthians to stop doing something, he'll get into persuasion mode.

00:29:00

Another is called forensic, which is essentially law code. But it's you get into attack mode.

**Jon** Dismantling someone's position?

**Tim** Yeah. You attack someone's credibility or the credibility of someone's case. You point out how something that's crazy, insane, ridiculous, and then you establish your own point of view as clearly superior and so on. I find that this is the mode that it's most off-putting to modern Westerners. Unless I guess you've been in debate class, which I never was in debate. Anyway.

Then the third is what's called display rhetoric. This is interesting, because in display rhetoric, you're actually not trying to make any new points or ideas. What you're doing is elevating certain people and values

00:30:00

and decisions as like, "This is what we're all about." You're celebrating certain choices and paths or devaluing others. This is how 1 John works completely. In 1 John, there isn't really anything new. In fact, he says it multiple points "You already know everything I'm writing to you." So you're persuading people and reminding them of what they already think they value and you're just holding it up as like, "Listen, you say you value this."

So these are kind of three modes. All of them are at work at different point in the New Testament.

**Tim** And these are modes that in the ancient Greco Roman world...

**Tim** People are trained in.

**Jon** They're specifically trained in these three modes.

**Tim** Correct. Deliberative.

**Jon** Deliberative. I want you to do something, so I'm going to try to convince you to do that thing. Forensic is I'm trying to prove a position against someone else's position. So there's a lot of tearing down the other position.

00:31:00

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** Display rhetoric is just...

**Tim** You're reinforcing what you think your audience already believes but you're trying to remind them and reinforce it so that they'll keep valuing that thing.

**Jon** This is happening everywhere in culture. Yesterday, the US Senate began its impeachment trial. It went like all day. So it was...

**Tim** And late into the night.

**Jon** Late in the night. Because I turned it on at night to listen to some of it...

**Tim** West Coast time.

**Jon** West Coast time. So it was midnight out there. And as I listened about half hour, and it was a lot of forensic rhetoric. It was a lot of like, "Let me explain why the other positions is just untenable and ridiculous." And deliberative rhetoric of like, "I want you to now really appreciate my position."

00:32:00

**Tim** That's right.

**Jon** And it really is all rhetoric.

**Tim** Persuasion.

**Jon** It's all persuasion.

**Tim** That's right.

**Jon** And they literally are trying to persuade a few people to change the way they're going to vote.

**Tim** Sitting at the front of the room.

**Jon** I want to persuade you to change the way you think.

**Tim** Totally. Yeah, that's exactly right. So for sure, Paul's writing and vocabulary display as all the signs of being raised in Jewish education system and then in his adult years being formed in some way through the Greco Roman education system. When you read Seneca's letters, you feel like Paul and Seneca were buddies. They talk like each other in how they make their arguments and points and what they're reflecting is a common educational track.

**Jon** Seneca was like in this stoke school of thought, right?

**Tim** Oh, I believe so. To summarize this point about rhetoric, essentially, what the body of the letters are is they're stylized speeches. They're literary stylized, condensed speeches using persuasive, forensic, and display rhetoric and different strategies. Here, I'll let Murphy O'Connor say this again. He said it well. First, let me contrast it. I think when I was introduced to the Bible, one of the main modes that I was introduced to was the theological handbook model, was I'm trying to form my beliefs as a new Christian in my 20s, what should I believe? And what should I do? So theological Handbook, where I go to certain verses to establish a belief based on the information *inaudible*.

00:33:00

00:33:36

So what this mode is adopting is learning to read the letters as communication wholes. And notice that their goal actually isn't just or even primarily to give me information. These letters are communication acts between two people, and they're designed to do something. They're trying to get something done.

**Jon** Convince me of something.

**Tim** Yeah. Or to get a certain group of people to actually do something. So Murphy O'Connor puts it this way. He says, "Paul never put a pen to paper except when it was absolutely imperative. A letter for Paul always had a definite goal. He designed it to accomplish something. Lacking any mechanism to impose his will, he couldn't enforce. He was inescapably bound persuasion. And in the ancient world, persuasion was the staple of the educated who were all trained in rhetoric."

00:34:00

So this interesting. Paul forms these communities, but these are all voluntary associations. The churches. People can leave. So he doesn't have power over them the way...

**Jon** Unless they give it to him.

**Tim** ...the senator would. So what you see Paul doing is trying to persuade people to the Christian worldview. So anytime he's communicating theology, it's always in the service of some goal, very practical goal that he's driving at in the course of the letter. 00:35:00

**Jon** I think what I hear you saying is, as you're reading a letter, there is a purpose for him writing that letter, it isn't "I want to give you a bunch of theological thoughts for you to dig out at your pleasure." It's usually something very tangible. "You guys need to stop living in this way. Start doing these kind of things." And all of that's reinforced through rhetoric. And in that rhetoric, he does make theological claims. But those theological claims are always serving the other thing.

**Tim** That's right.

**Jon** So to isolate the theological claim and then build something all around it apart from what he's doing, you can get in trouble.

**Tim** You can get in trouble. That's right. We're kind of back to the first one of what you call situational context. What can I learn about the situation he's writing into to understand his goals? Then knowing what his goals are will help me read the body of the letter and its flow of thought with more precision. Honoring his intent more, basically. So that's the first basic point. They are written speeches designed to accomplish something and they're using rhetoric to do it. That's one whole thing. We could go much further down that rabbit hole, but it's just a point to make that I found very helpful. 00:36:00

So that leaves really the most practical work left, which is to actually just read and reread and reread the body of the letter, and to follow it. I have found four practical steps to be immensely helpful. So I think what would be helpful is actually the pick a letter for us and for the video. I think the letter to the Ephesians could be really helpful. And just to kind of illustrate these steps.

**Jon** These steps?

**Tim** Yeah. There we go. Four steps to a better life by reading the New Testament letters. 00:37:00

**New Section** 00:37:40

**Tim** Step one. Get a sense of the whole body and isolate the paragraphs. Main paragraphs.

**Jon** Now Paul didn't write or any of these authors didn't write in paragraphs.

**Tim** Correct.



**Jon** It would all be just one dense...

**Tim** Yeah, one dense text.

**Jon** Maximizing space.

**Tim** That's right. So remember they were designed to be listened to. So what you're looking for is cues for transitions between bodies of thought. Now, let's talk about paragraphs for a second.

**Tim** Okay.

**Jon** Because I was never really taught what a paragraph is. I think I had to intuit it. Even to this day, there's times when I'm writing something, and I'm like, "I'm going to put a paragraph here." I could also not. I could put these two together." It almost feels like an art, not a science.

**Tim** It's totally an art. It's absolutely an art

**Jon** What makes a paragraph? And why are we isolating paragraphs?

**Tim** Oh, yeah, good. So you got the body of the letter. There's something that Paul or Peter wants to accomplish, and they've written a movement of thought to take me on a journey somewhere. So going next level. This is about learning to take my Bible reading to the next level.

**Jon** Because you could read that. You read the whole body in one go.

**Tim** In one go.

**Jon** And most letters you could do that in 15, 20 minutes. You can get a sense of what he's doing. 00:39:00

**Tim** Yeah, some main ideas, good one-liners, the basic flow of thought. So yeah, this is about taking your Bible reading one step further and really making more explicit and tracing and going slower to identify each step of where they've taken me and what each step is actually doing and how it fits into the whole.

**Jon** Now, a lot of Bibles have tried to do that for you.

**Tim** They have broken things into paragraphs.

**Jon** They break into paragraphs, and oftentimes even sections. Like, "Here's a header for you."

**Tim** And often giving them little summary headings that are sometimes helpful, sometimes unhelpful.

**Jon** So most likely in an opening row, you're going to find that was already broken down into paragraphs and main thoughts.

**Tim** That's right. They're usually maybe indent. Different Bibles have different conventions for how they marked paragraphs. But what you'll find in the body of letters is that each paragraph will almost always begin with what the author intended as a cue, an oral cue. For like Phoebe who's performing the letter to the Romans to a group of people, these would be cues that Phoebe would be following as she reads it aloud. 00:40:00

**Jon** I see. These would be kind of like "therefores"?

**Tim** Yeah. I'm going to call a group of words called logical connectors. They're hinge words that transition between a paragraph and a new paragraph. So yeah, it can be as simple as "and" but more often, words like "therefore", "for this reason", "because of this". So, here. Ephesians essentially consists of about 13 large paragraphs, and each one of them begins with a line like "For this reason."

**Jon** You haven't defined paragraph yet.

**Tim** Oh, a paragraph is either one focused movement of thought on a specific topic or idea. Or sometimes it will be a paragraph has itself a progression of thought within it. But it's a coherent, complete movement of thought signaled by these words called logical connectors. So as you go through, what you can often do is trace—and the translators will usually have done it for you—trace what are the paragraphs and identify the logical connector words that are the hinges between them. So "for this reason", "and as for you"... 00:41:00

**Jon** The logical connective word.

**Tim** ..."therefore", "on account of this", "now then", "so then". You get the idea. "Finally then". So visually when you're reading, this help. But this is why listening to something I find sometimes listening and reading, and you'll just start to notice these cues. So the first step in tracing the argument and flow of thought...

**Jon** Would you recommend for someone then to have a Bible that doesn't already do it for you just so you can practice doing it?

**Tim** You can. Yeah, totally. A practice I've been getting into in general for study mode is to get a digital Bible, get my computer out, and copy and paste to a Word doc... 00:42:00

**Jon** With no formatting?

**Tim** With no formatting. And just start doing the work myself. It forces you to slow down, pay attention in a way you wouldn't normally. These sorts of hinge words that summarize or transition paragraphs they really

stick out. Then there are some parts where you realize like, "Oh, the translators in my Bible made a decision to make a new paragraph here.

**Jon** I don't know if I would have done that.

**Tim** I maybe wouldn't have done that. But it gets you thinking in a way that you wouldn't have.

**Jon** Or maybe I didn't see something that they saw.

**Tim** Correct. You know, there's the difference between sitting down and eating a meal that's been prepared for you and then going back in the kitchen and getting the raw ingredients, and then making it yourself. It's been huge for me to just copy and paste.

**Jon** When you copy and paste from an online Bible, when I've done that, it always pulls over the verse markers, and oftentimes other footnote notations.

**Tim** Oh, yeah.

**Jon** Do you have any way around that?

00:43:00

**Tim** I don't know. For study...

**Jon** Are you doing in Logos?

**Tim** I do in Logos. But I'll just copy and paste usually the New American Standard because it's the most kind of word for word. But I try and find a version of copy and paste that doesn't have all the extra. So the first is just isolate the ingredients.

**Jon** The main paragraphs, the main flow thoughts. One of the authors shift from one idea and kind of finish up that idea and then go to the next.

**Tim** Correct.

**Jon** And there's usually a logical connector of sorts. Like, therefore, finally.

**Tim** That's right.

**Jon** And that's a hinge.

**Tim** Again, they're designed to be listened to and feel like a short speech. So usually, those logical connectors will stick out as oral cues to the transition. First, get all the main paragraphs. For Romans, it takes a long time. There are so many paragraphs.

**Jon** But in Ephesians, there's only 13.

**Tim** Yeah. There's a few debatable points, but there's 13.

00:44:00

**Jon** And that's just for the body or is that for the whole thing?

**Tim** That's for the body?

**Jon** For the body. Thirteen in the body.

**Tim** That's right. That's the first step. These steps are cyclical. The more you go through them, the more you'll be like, "Oh, I see. I think that is a paragraph" or "I think what I thought was a paragraph is actually two now."

Step two. Set each paragraph aside, and you're going to do individual work on it just studying it. So first is pay extra lavish attention to the opening paragraph. So very often, and especially Paul, Peter is like this too, the opening paragraphs are a little Symphony condensing all of the main... Kind of like Thanksgiving prayer, but then ratchet it up. Here's the basic thing. Everything that spills out of this is going to be coming back to the vocabulary and ideas of that opening movement, opening paragraph.

For example, if we're going to go with Ephesians, the opening paragraph of Ephesians is so remarkable. It's a beautiful poem that works in three steps, and ends each step with the same phrase, a little refrain, to the praise of God's glory, or to the praise of God's glorious grace. There are three movements. In good Hebrew Bible form, the first and third movements are symmetrical in vocabulary. The Trinitarian, where he's praising the Father, and the Messiah, and the Spirit for blessing and choosing us.

00:45:00

Then in the very center of the opening paragraph, he has this key point, which is going to unfold...literally, every paragraph in Ephesians is going to unfold something related to the thing at the very center of the opening paragraph. Which in Ephesians, Paul calls the mystery. "God has made known to us the mystery." It gets translated mysteries sometimes. I like the translation of Lesslie Newbigin. He translates the word "mystery" as the "open secret".

00:46:00

**Jon** Open secret.

**Tim** Yeah. In English, mystery means something that is still hidden.

**Jon** Something hidden, yeah.

**Tim** In Greek, mysterion mean something that was hidden, but now is out.

**Jon** But now is available. Do we have another word for that?  
I guess we don't. If Leslie had a better word.

**Tim** Yeah. The open secret. So these are the sentences at the center of the opening paragraph of Ephesians. "He made known to us the open secret of his will, according to this kind intention that he purposed in the Messiah. This was in accordance with his purpose that he pre-planned in the Messiah for the purpose of arranging the fulfillment of the times." This paragraph is remarkable.

Clearly, the point is God's been up to something, a plan, and that plan came to its fulfillment. And it's all been worked out. And what is the open secret that has been pre-planned? It's to head up or summarize. We'll talk about this. To summarize or head up all things in the Messiah, things in heaven and things on earth. So it's all about the heaven and earth coming together, becoming one in the Messiah through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension to become the cosmic King. There it is. I mean, he's made his main point in the first paragraph.

00:47:00

Not all of the opening paragraphs are designed quite as exquisitely as Ephesians.

**Jon** Well, is this likely a prayer or a poem that he had and then go, "Oh, that would be great to open the letter with this poem?"

**Tim** It's a great question. It begins the way a number of Psalms begin in the book of Psalms. So he's written it as a Messianic Jewish psalm but it's so clearly dialed in to the vocabulary and ideas that are going to repeat throughout the letter. Even if it had a pre-existence, he's adapted it to be the introduction of his letter.

00:48:00

**Jon** Okay. So we're in step two, we take one paragraph, and we just...you can even break that down. You can see, like, for example, in this first paragraph in Ephesians, it's got a three-part flow. It's a chiasm of sorts. And in the center of it, he's making a point that ends up really summarizing the whole book.

**Tim** That's right. That's right. And gives you the vocabulary that he's going to work out through the rest of it. Because what he's going to go on is then begin to talk about how God has brought together Israelites and non-Israelites, the nations together into one body. That's going to be major theme of the letter. Then he's going to talk about how within just the community of Jesus, slave and free, and the poor, and the rich you've all been brought together into one. Then he's going to go to the household, the husband and wife are brought together as one. The slave and Master are one.

**Jon** This is heading up all things?

**Tim** It's about all things being unified in the Messiah. So he's introducing it here, and then the rest of the letter he's going to be working out how it is exactly that heaven and earth and all things on heaven and earth have been made one in the Messiah. That's the basic idea.

00:49:00

**Jon** And it is usually the case that his first paragraph does this kind of work.

**Tim** Yeah. The Thanksgiving and then opening paragraph are often these places where he introduces. So what you're going to do, then, step three, then

is to then go forward. And if you've isolated all the paragraphs, you're just going to now kind of work your way through them and just study each one.

**Jon** So step two is just the first paragraph.

**Tim** One is isolate all the paragraphs. Step two, give a little extra love to the first paragraph because it's usually very strategic.

**Jon** Step three is now go through and look at all of them.

**Tim** Go through and just...and I find over time...

**Jon** So you just summarize like, "Oh, this paragraph is about this," and try to create your own headers almost.

**Tim** Yeah, I'll create my own summaries, identify repeated words. So this is where repeated words come in really...

00:50:00

**Jon** Repeated words within a paragraph?

**Tim** Studying repeated words within a paragraph. That's what we're focusing on right now. This is the most intuitive thing. It was one of the first skills I learned reading the Bible is learning to pay attention to repeated words. Which doesn't mean the identical word. It can be a group of words or related words. This happens a lot in the Hebrew Bible. This is what a German scholar Martin Buber called... we call it in German light word. In English, it means lead word.

Israelite biblical style of communication and the apostles pick it up where they'll have a word group or a key image that just works through the whole paragraph. I find getting colored markers and isolating repeated words and ideas, and then you can just see it in color. You can just see the flow of thought through the ideas.

So I have one example. For podcast listeners, this is not going to be that helpful. But I just put Romans 8.

**Jon** And then you highlighted keywords. Would you consider this one paragraph?

00:51:00

**Tim** Oh, I just have the whole chapter.

**Jon** Oh, you have the whole chapter.

**Tim** Just have the whole chapter here. So forget even the paragraphs within the chapter. I'm just paying attention to words.

**Jon** So you're doing repeated words across a whole string of paragraphs?

**Tim** Yeah, within one chapter. That's right. Totally. I should have technically broken into paragraphs.

**Jon** And obviously, there's no one correct way of doing this. But you're kind of giving a progression. And in your progression, you isolate the paragraphs and then you look at just the key words within a paragraph first before you start seeing key words that go across paragraphs.

**Tim** Correct. That's right.

**Jon** Okay.

**Tim** Romans 8 is itself a whole movement that culminates chapters 5 through 8 and then culminates, and a new movement of the letter begins.

**Jon** When letters get really long like Romans, you could have paragraphs that lead up to the body. It's almost like you get these new paragraphs that lead up to like whole movements and movements that build the body.

**Tim** That's right. The main movements of Romans are like 1 through 4, 5 through eight, 9 to 11, 12 to 15. Then within each of those, there's paragraphs and subheadings and stuff like that. This is more just an exercise to say, here's Romans, chapter 8." And you can just see the spirit is through almost the entire chapter, in almost all the key important movements of thought.

00:52:00

This contrast between spirit and flesh goes all the way up through verses 1 to 13. Then you don't see flesh anymore. What you see is spirit and family language. So the spirit is dealing with the flesh in the first movement. Then the spirit is creating the new family of God: children, Father, heirs, children, childbirth, sonship, firstborn. Then the whole chapter culminates in this dense repetition of the word "love". The love of Christ, the one who loved us with the love of God.

00:53:00

Even just like going through and with a marker, and you can just start to see big movements of thought of the spirit is dealing with the old humanity, creating a new family. And it all culminates in the love of God. And just that right there is cool to notice. You can even just see a movement of thought by paying attention to the color of your markers and noting repeated words.

**Jon** It seems like this is the most valuable when you do it across paragraphs, so you can see the flow of thought.

**Tim** If you're looking at Romans 8:1-13, what you'll notice is a dense repetition of "spirit" and "flesh" and dense repetition of "death" and "life" vocabulary. Like right in here, verses 1 through 11, would be like a paragraph. Then as you begin verse 12, you get a therefore, new paragraph, you get a little spirit and flesh, it's like a hinge, and then he starts moving into the spirit and the new family language.

00:54:00

This would be like one paragraph to study verses 1 through 11, and just noticing what's going on here. Yeah, isolate the next one, noticing there. But it's the same skill set as the do the next step, which is start to notice patterns repetition across.

**Jon** Once you've done it, or just individual paragraphs, and you can step back and look at the whole thing.

**Tim** Yeah. And usually, it's happening simultaneously. So I think visually what we can do in the video, I think we can communicate this all pretty simply. To say there are ancient style speeches, they have movements of thought, broken into paragraphs, indicated by logical connectors. That's one step.

Second step is start noticing we can use color or something, repetition of words within individual bits, and then how whole themes occur across the letters repetition. That's pretty simple point. But at least for me, it's taken me years of reading and rereading to really get it. Because this is dense.

00:55:00

**Jon** Yeah. I mean, once you've done this, it's not like all of a sudden, "Oh, it's all makes sense now."

**Tim** Yeah, totally. Sure. There's still individual bits or paragraphs where you're just like, "How does that fit in?"

### **New Section**

00:56:04

**Jon** This is step three or this is step four?

**Tim** Step three is identify repeated words within individual paragraphs. The next part of step three is follow it throughout paragraphs. This is what your intuition is. So if you do it through Ephesians, for example, if we wanted to do it through Ephesians, it would be about the unity of all things in heaven on earth and the Messiah. And then what you would start to pay attention to is, okay, this image of many becoming one, things coming together, things unify, things coming under the head, the verbiage is to head up, is all going to be connected. And so lo and behold, the next paragraph culminates with Jesus being made head over all things.

Chapter 2 has this long thing about Jew and non-Jew, the two becoming one in one body. In chapter 3, it's about my role as an apostle, that Jews and non-Jews are fellow heirs in the same body. Chapter 4 has this long bit about how we're all really different, but we all are part of one body with one spirit and one hope. So you can start to see the key vocabulary of unity and oneness and body summary. And it's just like a red thread throughout the whole letter from beginning to end. And it was all given to you in that first paragraph. Then you notice it in each individual paragraph, and then you see it like a thread uniting all the paragraphs.

00:57:00



So the last step is go back, and you've got repeated words in each paragraph throughout. Now, come back to those clues that helped you identify paragraphs in the first place, those logical connectors, and then take them seriously. It's like a building of an argument.

So the opening prayer of Ephesians 1:15, "For this reason." Chapter 2, verse 1, "And as for you." Then really allow those to inform the logic of how the paragraphs progress as a flow of thought. There you go. You feel like you're being taken on a ride. All of a sudden, the role that a paragraph plays within the larger whole, you begin to see it more as like a little movement within a big symphony.

00:58:00

What I have found is as I begin to read the letters as holds this way, the old mode of treating these letters as theological dictionary and coming to a paragraph and just taking one verse out, it almost feels wrong. Because what I'll be asking is, "No, wait a minute, this paragraph comes at this point in the argument. And in light of the whole, it's making this point." I guess you can quote it out of context and use it to make this point. And sometimes you'd be like, "Oh, yeah, that's what Paul was trying to say. That's a good point. I should build that into my theology."

00:59:00

But it'll also really help you spot verses that are taken out of context. And then you'll kind of be able to see maybe when there's some verse or some idea that you had that was being built on verse being totally taken out of context in the flow of thought.

**Jon** Here's what I've I find is my experience in the letters. I'm now imagining, "Okay, I'm going to do this exercise" is I'm going to get to a paragraph and I'm going to get to a sentence in a paragraph. And that sentence is just going to confuse me and confound me.

**Tim** Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah.

**Jon** And it's going to use a word that's just loaded in my mind, like predestined or something. And then I'm going to start thinking about everything I think that might mean and I'll just get stuck there. My intuition is I got to solve this, I got to figure out what Paul means here. I guess what I'm hearing potentially is some freedom to then not try to solve all the like, what does Paul exactly mean by this term? And what is his theology behind this and that? It's to just move on and really try to see what's he doing in this letter and not get tripped up by those questions?

01:00:00

**Tim** Yeah. But I build lists of those questions.

**Jon** You start marking those questions.

**Tim** Yeah, you start marking them. And then I go back. Sometimes it's the word study. So it'd be like, okay, let's dive in, create destination vocabulary. So you get out of concordance. Where else did Paul use this word? Look at all those? Where else is the word used in the New Testament and the rest of the Bible? So sometimes a word study will be the next step if it's a word that's throwing you. If it's just the sentence doesn't make any sense to me, then you go to your nerd friend, Tim, and say, "Do you have any commentary on Ephesians?" And I'll be like, "Which one?" There you go.

But if you want to understand these texts, easiest skill set to develop is what we just went through. That's not going to solve everything but it's going to highlight all kinds of things. But my hunch is that you would have a sense of "Okay, he's at this point in the argument and it seems like this is what he's doing. I can see that's what this paragraph is about..."

**Jon** Helps me organize what I do and do not understand, or oftentimes I'll come to the part of the letter and it's just like, "What is he talking about?" And I have like a dozen questions. I feel frustrated. But now I have so many questions. I don't even know how to prioritize the questions. If I open up someone else's commentary, they have different questions that they're trying to answer sometimes. Not my questions. So now I've got their questions and my questions. I just often find myself like, "This is too much work." What I hear this doing is at least it's helping me organize my questions and understand where they fit within the whole flow of the body of the letter and get some more shape to it.

**Tim** Totally. Yeah, that's right. This is a process that I was introduced to in my second class on how to study the Bible. I didn't even know Greek. And I just started doing this in English. Anybody could do this in translation. It's learning how to follow the big picture flow of thought, looking at each step of the journey, and beginning to profile each paragraph. Then it gives you a place to hang all your questions about each paragraph and how it fits in at the words. It brings order to the chaos. Otherwise, you're just like, "What do you do with these huge bodies of these letters?"

**Jon** What you do is you just find a part of it and read that part, you meditate on it and hope that that gives you something.

**Tim** That's what most of us do. This is more just kind of "here's a way to take it easy next step." And that can take you really far. What I find then is when I do start using commentaries, I'm coming with some insights that I've already gained on my own. I'm not a blank slate anymore to just take whatever they say at face value. It's that I'm invested. So we haven't addressed this. This is work.

**Jon** It is work.

01:01:00

01:02:00

01:03:00

**Tim** It's work. It's work to really understand these letters, and internalize what they're trying to communicate.

### **New Section**

01:04:04

**Tim** So another step, which would be like next level would be when they quote from the Old Testament, go look it up.

**Jon** You know what I'm realizing is there's a couple of things like word studies or looking at things in Old Testament. These are almost like meta skills that we could add to the how to read the Bible.

**Tim** True. Oh, to the series?

**Jon** To the series. I mean, we did one on design patterns, which wasn't originally on your list.

**Tim** Correct. It's true.

**Jon** So kind of the same thing with word studies that kind of get you in the same world.

**Tim** There is a sense in which I think we could maybe build it into this video. I feel like we could do even though it's taken us a while to talk through all of this, I feel like this is all...

**Jon** Yeah, it's very visual thing...

**Tim** It's visual. We can communicate it pretty simply. We could do a quick little...it would just take 30 seconds of like a little bonus. "If you really want to supercharge your reading, notice there's always quoting from the first three-quarters of the Bible. Start going and looking that up..."

01:05:00

**Jon** Go look that up

**Tim** ...and read them in context. And you'll either be confused like I was actually most of the time, or you'll see cool things. Then the second would be word studies, which is essentially a concordance. Technically, that could be its own video—how to do word studies.

**Jon** But looking up, your translation will likely show you when there is reference to another part of the Bible.

**Tim** That's right. If you're quoting from another part of the Bible.

**Jon** And sometimes they quote directly, and sometimes it's more of a summary.

**Tim** They'll paraphrase; they'll use a couple of words. Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** What I found is most Bibles do a pretty good job of showing you those in footnotes. But then what I find is I go look those up and now I'm in another text, or I'm even more confused than the text it came from.

**Tim** Yeah, totally.

**Jon** So it's truly like a two *unintelligible* level. 01:05:56

**Tim** That's right. So this video is about the literary context, reading the letters as wholes, crafted written speeches. Notice when they're tweaking the forms, and also learn how to follow and trace the flow of thought through repeated words over the course of many paragraphs. There you go. 01:06:00

**Jon** That's a lot of work.

**Tim** That's a whole lot of work and potential just right there.

Thank you, everybody, for listening to this episode of the BibleProject podcast. This series on how to read the Bible, it's done. We're going to release a final Q&R episode for this series on the letters. But this How to Read the Bible series, it's been years in the making. It's a long playlist of episodes in our podcast archive. Thank you for coming on this amazing journey with us. John and I have learned so much.

If you want to submit a question for the last Q&R in the How to Read the Bible series, you can submit it by the end of the day Tuesday, August 4th. If you could record yourself asking a question and then you can send it to us at [info@bibleproject.com](mailto:info@bibleproject.com). Also Goldstar if you could write out the question, transcribe it for us. Also, we'd love to know your name and where you're from. 01:07:00

Today's show is produced by Dan Gummel, the show notes were produced by Camden McAfee, and the theme music is from the band Tents. This whole series of podcasts conversations on how to read the Bible goes along with a collection of videos on how to read the Bible that we made for the BibleProject. You can find all of that on YouTube or on the Bible project website, which is [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com). It's all available for free, and that's because of the generous support of all kinds of people around the world just like you all. So thank you so much, everybody. And thank you for being a part of this with us.

**Saavi** Hi, this is Saavi SP and I'm from India. I first heard about the BibleProject when I watched one of their videos on YouTube. I use the BibleProject for having a better understanding of the Bible. My favorite thing about the BibleProject is the wonderful and engaging animation and how they break down complex theology into things that I can 01:08:00

understand. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We are a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, study notes, podcast, classes, and more at [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com).