

Analytical Outlines

Analytical Outlines are summaries of each section of a book of the Bible into single sentence bullet points. These sentences will be rich and meaningful, pulling in all the main ideas of a section and showing how they relate. This project forces students to summarize and then synthesize the major themes of each section of a book, and show how they all relate together to form the flow of a book. This project not only helps students to think through what the author was emphasizing and how he structured his book to communicate and unpack these ideas, but will also serve as a tool for future study to remind the students of the main ideas and flow of each book.

An outline structure will be provided for every book of the Old Testament as a starting point (for graduate level, students could come up with the structure too). Students then study through each section of that outline, seeking to list the major themes and ideas in each section. Students should start with the bottom (and most detailed) level of the outline, as higher levels will simply be summaries of the bottom level points. Students can do this portion of the assignment as they are reading and doing the questions, and even while listening to the videos can pull out major themes and ideas. Students should be especially focused on trying to discern what the main idea or point of the section is. Once the main idea/point and a long list of other major themes for each section is developed, students should group and combine similar or redundant themes, and try to come up with 5-8 major themes for each section. As much as possible, students should try to use biblical words and terminology in coming up with the themes so that the sentence can direct readers back to the text itself and show how it develops its themes. Students should then think about how the major themes all relate to each other and how they relate to the point of section that is being looked at, and how that section relates to the main point of the book as a whole.

Next students should try to come up with the main subject and verb of their sentence. Ideally, the main subject of the sentence should be the main actor or idea in the section of Scripture (often God), and the main verb should communicate the main action or idea of the section. Then all of the other major themes in the list should be added to the sentence by showing how they relate to this main idea.

A good sentence will not simply list all the major themes with an 'and' between them. It will show how the various themes relate to each other with good connecting words and phrases like "through," "so that," "because," "resulting in," "culminating in," "by doing," etc., etc. Well crafted sentences communicate clearly and artfully the meaning, emphases, and connections in the text.

As an example, many of the major themes of Genesis 1:1-2:3 would be: "God, good, said, saw, created, rule, image, Spirit, separated, called, sanctified, rested, blessed, 'let there be', day, and 'formless and void.'" Our main subject is 'God.' And our main verb is 'created.' That forms our main sentence "God created." That is a full sentence, and if we had to summarize this section of Genesis into only two words, that would probably be the best way to do it. But now we need to fit in as many of the other major themes that we can and show how they fit into this idea. So a good example would be: "Through His Word and energized by His Spirit, God created everything good, climaxing in His blessing of mankind to rule for Him and under Him in His image, setting aside the seventh day for worship."

No sentence is perfect, and you can work all day on a single sentence, trying to make it more compact, fit in more themes, flow better, and show how the main ideas relate to each other more elegantly. So this project will take time. But it will be fun, it will make you wrestle through what really is the main point of each section of Scripture and how it all relates, and ultimately will be a roadmap of each book of the Bible that you will be able to refine and follow for the rest of your life.

Following are the rubric and marks used in grading the sentences to help understand what makes good sentences.

Analytical Outline Marks/Grading

Themes

- *MT – More themes. Expand your sentence to include more of the major themes in this section. You should always start writing your sentences by studying the section and trying to pull out all the major themes and the main point/idea of the section. You want to be specific in including these themes and showing how they relate to each other.
- KT – Key theme. You may not need to include more themes (see above) in this sentence, but you missed a very important theme (or themes) that are key to this section. Remove other themes if necessary or rewrite the rest of the sentence to be simpler so you can include this/these very important theme(s).
- BL – Biblical language. Use the language/terms of the Bible whenever possible. Try not to use our terminology, but use the terminology and wording that the Bible uses. For example, we could describe Genesis 1 by saying “God created everything perfect.” While that may be completely true, it would be better to say that “God created everything good,” which is the word that the chapter repeats and better communicates what the author was trying to emphasize.
- NT – Not a theme. You included a theme that is not a theme in this section. It may be a theme in this book but not mentioned in this particular section. Or it may be a theme in another book of the Bible but not here. Make sure that the themes you include are the main themes of this section.
- TH – Theological. Don't just repeat what happened and give the facts of a section (especially in a narrative). Show what the main point and major themes of the story were. Try to use the Biblical language of the passage if possible, but sometimes in order to summarize a section you will need to use a word not in that section. Try to use words and terminology found elsewhere in the book or somewhere else in the Bible rather than theological language. We want the sentences to be a roadmap to the text, helping readers to see what the text is emphasizing and how it develops its themes.
- TB – Too broad. Be more specific. Include specific themes and not just the general idea of a section.
- MC – Main clause. Watch your main subject and verb in your sentence. The main subject and verb of your sentence should be the main subject and action of the section. Often (but not always) the main subject of your sentence should be God since He is the hero of the whole Bible.
- BC – Better connection. A good sentence shows how the various themes relate to each other through the use of conjunctions and connecting words. There should be several clauses in the sentence that are connected to show the relationship between the various parts of the sentence. A semi-colon (;) will always earn you this mark for these sentences. Often an 'and' is a lazy way of connecting two parts of a sentence. Use good connections/conjunctions like “through,” “so that,” “because,” “resulting in,” “culminating in,” “by doing,” etc., etc.

*The mark you will probably see on your paper the most is MT. The hardest part of these sentences is to study through and understand what all the major themes of a section are. And then you have to figure out how to fit all of them together in a single sentence!

Clear Communication

- NS – Not a sentence. Your “sentence” is not a complete sentence. A sentence needs a main subject and a main verb. A clause is not a sentence. For example, “Running through the forest” is not a sentence, while “They ran through the forest” is a complete sentence.
- OS – One sentence. Each sentence should be a single sentence! This forces you to show how all the ideas of a section fit and flow together.
- WD – Wordy. You have a lot of words that don't say as much as they could. You can rewrite the sentence more concisely. This mark often coincides with “More themes (MT).” Write what you have more concisely so you can include more themes.
- RD – Redundant. Redundancy in your sentence takes away from other themes that you could include. This is related to 'Wordy' (WD) above.
- DF – Doesn't flow. Your wording is awkward and the sentence doesn't flow well. The sentence is hard to read and understand.
- RO – Run on. Your sentence is too long and just keeps on going. You may have chained together too many 'ands' in a row. Often a sentence can be good even if it is long, but it needs proper conjunctions and flow or it just reads poorly.
- PR – Perspective. Take note of your perspective as the author when writing the sentence. Don't tell us that the Bible tells us something, tell us what it says. For example, don't say, “Genesis 1 tells us that God created...” Just say, “God created...”

Excellence

- FMT – Format. Make sure the format of your sentences is readable. Hand-written sentences will always earn you this mark. Make sure you include the passage references for each sentence so I know which passage the sentence is summarizing. A clear outline of the sentences that shows which sections are subsections of others also helps with readability. I don't need it in a particular format, but it should be readable.
- SP – Spelling. You spelled this word wrong.
- PC – Punctuation. Make sure you use proper punctuation.
- CA – Capitalization. Follow the rules of capitalization as well.
- GR – Grammatical mistake. This could be anything from knowing the difference between “its” and “it's” to using the wrong verb tense. Learn to write properly and make sure to proof-read your sentences!

Incomplete

- IN – Incomplete. You forgot to do one or more of the sentences! There is a large penalty for this. Finish your homework!