

Phrasing Steps (Bill Mounce)

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

Foundational Expressions

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

1. Assertion. Making a statement.

John 15:1. I am the true vine.

2. Event/Action. Something that happened.

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

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

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

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

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

5. Exclamation.

Rom 7:24. Wretched man that I am!

6. Exhortation (command/encouragement).

Mark 8:33. “Get behind me, Satan!”

7. Warning.

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

8. Promise.

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

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

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

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

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

Modifications

These are different ways to modify the main assertion.

Temporal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Location

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

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

6. Sphere. The domain or realm of existence.

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

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

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

8. Separation. Creating distance between two parties.

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

Adverbial – modifies or tells us something about the sentence or the verb.

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

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

10. Circumstance. Situations surrounding events or actions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19. Association. Expresses the idea of accompaniment.

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

20. Relationship. Expresses some form of personal relationship.

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

21. Possession. Expresses ownership.

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

Logic

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

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

23. Condition. A requirement that must be fulfilled.

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

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

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

25. Concession. A reservation or qualification.

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

26. Contrast. Two conditions, ideas, or actions put together in order to point out differences.
Eph 5:17. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

27. Comparison. Two conditions, ideas, or actions put together in order to point out similarities.
John 20:21. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

28. General/Specific. When a general and a specific statement are put side-by-side to show the relationship between a broader and a particular concept, truth, or action.
Heb 5:4-5. No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed.

Clarification

29. Restatement. The same idea is expressed in a different way.
Heb 8:12. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

30. Description. Functions to provide vivid detail of a person, event, state, or object.
Rev 12:3. A great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

31. Identification. Information used to specify a person or thing. Answers the question, “Which one?”
John 3:1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

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

33. Apposition. A noun or participle that follows immediately another noun or participle with which it shares a common referent.
Eph 3:1. For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus.

34. Explanation. The addition of clarifying statements to a main proposition.
Matt 6:7. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

35. Alternative (either . . . or). When one condition, action, or place is expressed as a possible substitute for another.
Matt 6:24. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

36. Question and answer.
Mark 8:29. And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”

Form

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

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

39. List. A number of things, normally of the same kind, mentioned one after the other.
1 Pet 1:1. To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

40. Series. The joining of equally prominent assertions or commands in a loose association.
1 Thess 5:16-18. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.

41. Parallel. Two or more elements correspond verbally or conceptually.
Matt 5:13-14. You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world.