

Bible Charting for the #NoPlaceLeft Army Network  
By Jim McKnight

As disciples mature in their obedience to the scriptures, they will need forms of bible study that challenge them to mine for more subtle truths. This guide teaches a method to facilitate this mining. While less reproducing than the Commands of Christ, this approach promises to be transforming over a lifetime. It is long-term discipleship. The end goal of this method of bible study is that disciples 1) can study and master any passage of the bible they choose, and 2) teach it to others in a simple way. Disciples should not approach this method of study unless they habitually live the foundational practices of the Christian life, have memorized dozens of verses, and have read the entire bible at least once. Furthermore, disciples will glean the most from these kinds of studies when they practice them with their churches in community.

The format for the study holds to the basic Head, Heart, Hands outline, but expands each step into three sub steps, for a total of nine steps:<sup>11</sup>

**Head:**

1. Phrase the Passage
2. Format the Passage
3. Find the Key Center

**Heart:**

4. Passage Atmosphere
5. Players Feelings
6. Personal Reaction

**Hands:**

7. Say
8. Obey
9. Share

**Head:**

Step 1: Phrase the Passage

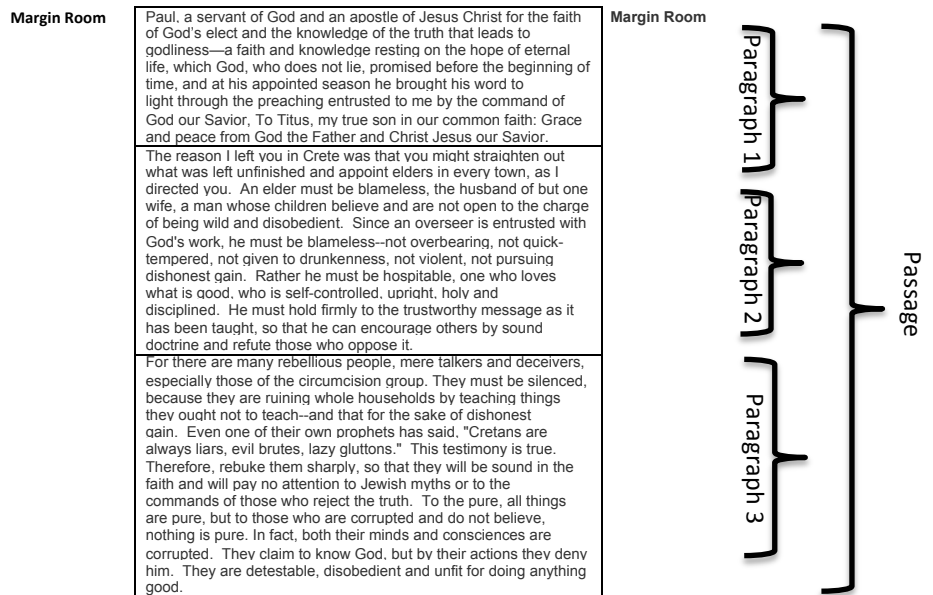


Figure 1

Begin by writing the passage of scripture inside a rectangular box down the middle of your page. You may do this entire study with a computer or freehand. Choose a passage that is about 15-30 verses long. It does not have to correspond to a chapter. Subdivide the passage further into paragraphs where you see fit. Passages should have about 5-10 verses in them. Try to break the passage where you believe the Holy Spirit shifts His thinking. Leave room in each margin and at the top and bottom to record information later. See the example from Titus 1 in Figure 1.

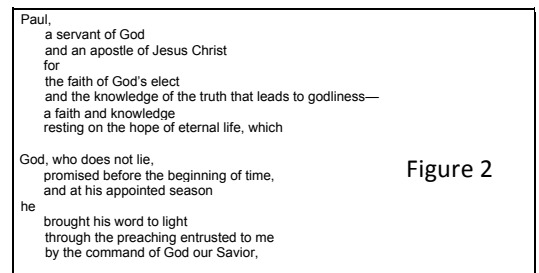


Figure 2

Next begin Phrasing the passage by either using your computer to enter spaces or re-writing the passage by phrase. Break the sentences where the thought changes most significantly. The most significant thoughts should be aligned further to the left and the supporting ideas aligned further to the right. There is no wrong way to do this step. Trust the Holy Spirit and break it using your judgment. In the example below the phrasing draws out the two main actors in the passage: Paul and God. For illustration the first four verses of Titus 1 are above in Figure 2.

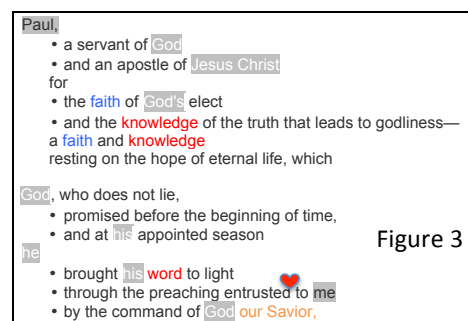


Figure 3

<sup>1</sup> The majority of the content of this study guide is adapted from Jensen, Irving L. *Independent Bible Study*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1992.

**Head:**

Step 2: Format the Passage:

Now comes the fun part. Begin to mark the passage using different colors, font sizes and types, arrows, and symbols. The sky is the limit. Try to mark like thoughts to show how the passage is connected. In Figure 3 the disciple highlighted to show the interconnected work between the Apostle Paul and God. He used a heart to emphasize “entrusted,” and highlighted the repeated words faith and knowledge. The only rule here is that you cannot change the words of the text. The text should stand alone. Anyone who reads your text should immediately see the main things you observed and how you interpreted the passage.

**Head:**

Step 3: Find the Key Center.

This is the most challenging and rewarding part of the study. Once you have phrased and formatted the rest of the text you should be getting very familiar with it. Now choose a key center, or the main phrase that ties the whole passage together. Draw a box around it. If it is truly a key center, it should relate to every other section in the passage in some way. Draw an arrow from the key center to the other phrase to which it relates. This step should take some time, meditation, and massaging. It should force you to really figure out the Holy Spirit’s main point.

Once you have found the key center, write a title that is the same or very similar to the key center. Then write a subtitle for each section showing how it relates to the Key Center. The subtitle should go in the left margin next to the section it subtitles. In the example in Figure 4, “Hold to the

Hold to the Message...	...God Entrusted to Me
	...We Now Share
	...You Must Entrust to Elders
	...Which Silences the Rebellious

Message” is the title, and each subtitle is written as if it could be a continuation of the titling, demonstrating the connection.

Finally, record any supplementary material you find in the right margin. Put cross-references, word studies, or other questions about the passage. Keep the ideas focused so they fit in the margin, but be creative with your supplementary material.

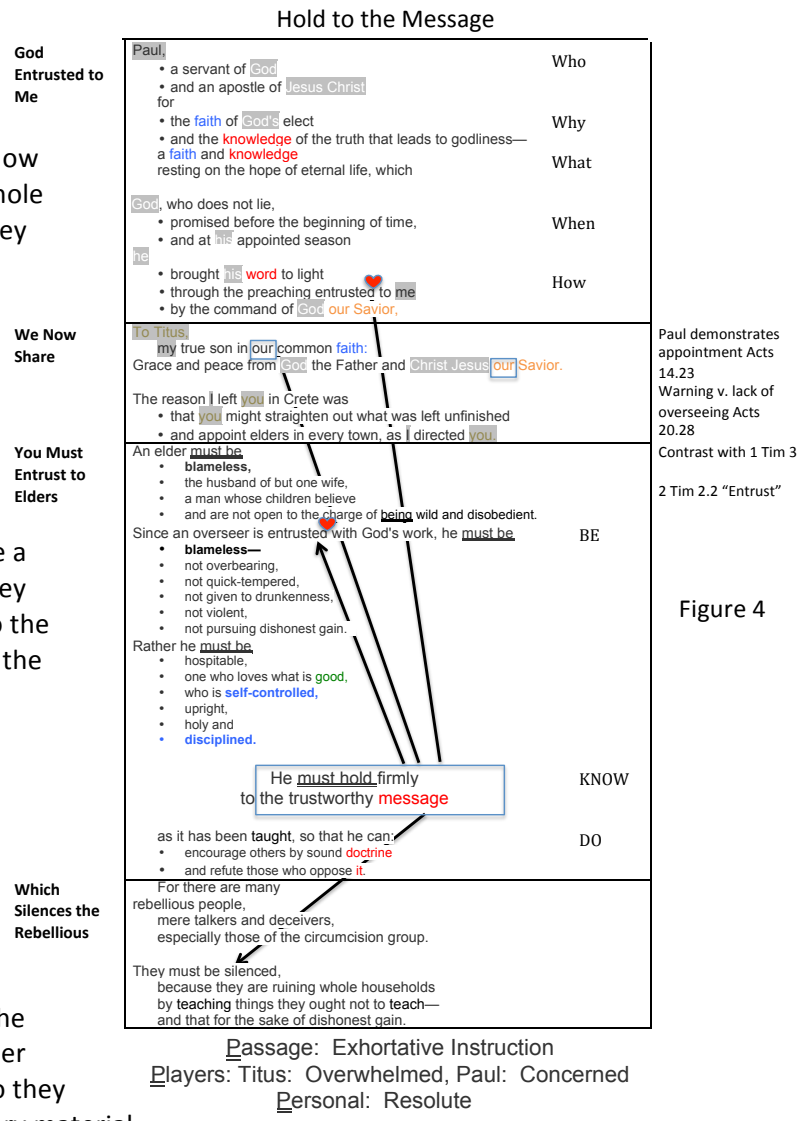
The disciple in Figure 4 found some additional information about the use of the word “entrust” and the consequences of not entrusting overseers correctly.

**Heart:**

Step 4: Passage Feeling.

How does the entire passage feel? What is its atmosphere, or tone? Read the text one more time slowly with your phrasing and formatting, and write the feeling of the passage as a whole.

**Heart:**



## Step 5: Players Feelings.

The people involved in the passage are experiencing feelings. They are real people who really lived. Put yourself in their shoes for a minute. If the passage is a story, imagine that the story is happening to you. If it is a letter or poetry, imagine you were writing it, or receiving it. Steps 4 and 5 are essential to correctly interpreting the passage.

### **Heart:**

Step 6: Personal Feelings. Stop and pray and ask the Holy Spirit to begin sifting your heart. You have been interacting with this passage a lot by now. How have you felt as you have studied? As you imagine being in the player's shoes, how did you feel? Step 6 is essential to correctly applying the passage. As the Holy Spirit begins to make you feel about the passage He is speaking to you. Summarize the feelings associated with the passage at the bottom of the chart. See Figure 4.

### **Hands:**

Step 7: Say

Write a short paragraph on God's message to you. In the past you have written a sentence or two. Develop what God is saying to you. Resist the temptation to summarize the passage. Write the words the Holy Spirit is communicating to you.

### **Hands:**

Step 8: Obey

Now it's time to get specific. Write a measureable way in which you will respond and obey the Holy Spirit. This is the time when you translate how you are feeling into what you will practically do to serve Jesus Christ, in response to what His Spirit has said. Be a doer of the word, and not a hearer (or studier) only (Jas 1.22).

### **Hands:**

Step 9: Share

It's time to grow in your ability to share. In the past you noted something that you would share loosely. This time, write Head, Heart, and Hands questions as if you were going to teach this passage to a new disciple. The questions should help him see some of the deep truths you found as you were studying the passage. Ask questions that drive him to see and experience what you experienced. Write 2-3 questions for Head; write 2-3 for Heart; and write 2-3 for Hands. This gives you a total of 6-9 questions. If done well, the questions should be simple enough that he can ask someone the same questions and lead them through the passage; however, the questions will also be challenging and insightful causing growth in Christ.

Here is an example from Titus 1:

Head:

- What is Titus's main problem in overseeing the ministry on Crete?
- What is the solution that Paul directs?
- What are the requirements for leaders?

Heart:

- How does Titus feel when he receives this letter?
- How does Paul feel when he writes this letter?
- How does this passage make you feel?

Hands:

- Are you holding firmly to the trustworthy message?
- Have you established overseers as necessary in the ministry God has given you?
- Have you correctly organized the elders underneath you?