

Structuring Greetings and Salutations:

The opening verses of most epistles do not contain complete thoughts or sentences as we recognize them. So we simply arrange the text in a logical way to see the flow of thought. The author's and the recipient's names are placed on the left margin and phrases that describe them are indented under them. Here are several examples:

Philemon 1:1-3 NASB –

I Paul,
 a prisoner of Christ Jesus,
and
Timothy
 our brother,
To Philemon
 our beloved brother
 and
 fellow worker,
2 and
to Apphia
 our sister,
and
to Archippus
 our fellow soldier,
and
to the church in your house:
3
Grace to you
and
peace
 from God our Father
 and
 the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you look down the left margin, it is easy to see that this letter is from Paul and Timothy to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the church in their house. But what also becomes apparent is what you learn about each individual mentioned, by the descriptors that are indented under their names.

Remember that punctuation is added by the translators. I don't always edit out every period, comma etc. However, if you find yourself allowing the punctuation to interrupt your ability to see the flow of thought, do go ahead and take it out. Let's try another one – in red I am putting the 5w&h to show how they help me think through the text. I don't actually add them, of course, but I want you see how I use them.

Eph 1:1-2 NASB –

|

Paul (*who*)

an apostle of Christ Jesus (*what*)

by the will of God (*how*)

To the saints (*who*)

who are at Ephesus (*where*)

and

who are faithful in Christ Jesus (*what*)

2

Grace to you

And

peace

from God our Father (*who*)

and

the Lord Jesus Christ. (*who*)

Ok detail people out there – you can break this down even more. However, if you break it up too much, you will lose the flow of thought rather than make it clearer. For example:

Eph 1:1-2 NASB –

|

Paul

an apostle

of Christ Jesus

by the will of God

To the saints

who are at Ephesus
and
who are faithful
in Christ Jesus

2

Grace to you
And
peace
from God
our Father
and
the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Let's try another one.

Col 1:1-2 NASB –

I
Paul
an apostle of Jesus Christ
by the will of God
and
Timothy
our brother

2

To the saints
and
faithful brethren in Christ
who are at Colossae
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

As you can see there are different ways to do this but in all of them the main people are at the left margin and the phrases that explain something about them are

indented. A greeting like “Grace to you and peace from God our Father” can be broken out more or left together – again depending on if you are a detail person or a big picture person.

Your turn – give this greeting a try and then I will post my structure of it later. Practice is what makes this get easier so go ahead and choose a couple of other epistles to try. I would not do Romans just yet. I will do that one as an example in my next post because it is probably one of the most complex greetings in the NT. I suggest 1 and 2 Peter v 1-2 and this one in Jude.

Jde 1:1-2 NASB –

1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

Please post any questions you have for the group. If you have a question, others do to!

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