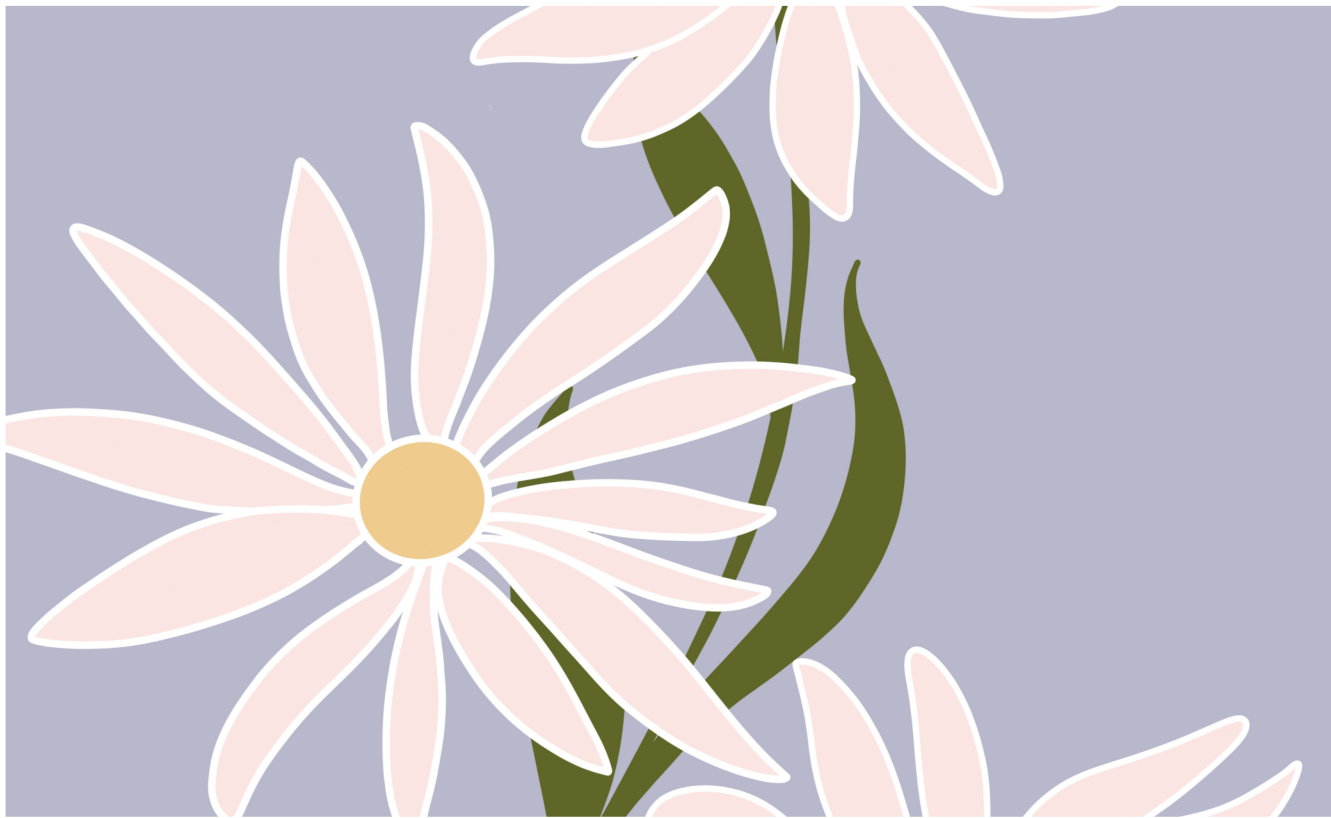




Lesson 2 Don't Skip the Intro

Acts Intro



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Acts 1 Lesson 2

Don't Skip the Intro

What the Intro Teaches Us

Recently, when I was scrolling through social media, I noticed that an author friend of mine asked her friends, "Do you ever pay attention to the introduction of a book?"

I was intrigued by her question because I used to skip over the beginning of a book to "get to the good part." However, once I became a writer, I realized that authors often reveal their heart or purpose of the book or in the first few lines.

Think about it.

When you were in school, did your teachers encourage you to place your thesis, or purpose statement, in the first paragraph so that your reader could understand what you are trying to communicate and why at the onset?

- **Authors provide purpose statements so their readers will know what the author is trying to communicate and why**

continued . . .

Many biblical authors also provide purpose statements in the beginning of their works. Just like your teacher instructed, if a biblical writer is going to identify themselves, their audience, and their reason for writing, it is contained in the first few verses. Their introduction often sets the tone for the type of literature (genre), their purpose for writing, and the author and audience to whom the literature is being written (although author and audience are not always provided). Sometimes the author and audience are not obvious, but most Bibles provide a synopsis of each book to enlighten readers so that they can read within context.

Example from Galatians 1:1-7



Author and Audience

Paul is the author and he is writing to the church in Galatia.

1 Paul, an apostle — not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead — 2 and all the brothers who are with me: To the churches of Galatia.



Author's Greeting

Paul greets the church.

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. 5 To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.



Author's Purpose

Paul's reason for writing.

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — 7 not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:1-7

What the Intro Teaches Us

According to Galatians 1:1-7, it is obvious that Paul is the author, and this writing is a letter (literary genre) to "the church in Galatia."

Audience: According to the Romans, Galatia was a province which is "located in modern-day Turkey" was called Galatia by the Romans (Powell, 326). However, "the people who called themselves "Galatians" were descended from the Celtic tribes that settled in the northern part of the province" and it is questionable as to whether Paul traveled there (Powell, 326). However, deSilva maintains that Paul's address could have "been used ethnically" or for those "any group residing in the Roman province of Galatia" (432). (More on this in bibliography.)

Purpose: Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians because he was concerned that they were abandoning and distorting the gospel of Jesus in favor of some other gospel.

The Bible was not specifically written TO us, BUT it was written FOR us.



Application: It is important to understand that Paul authored Galatians for a group of people whom he had pastored and was concerned for because he had heard that their faith was failing. This is the lens through which we should read this book. It is also important to understand that **the Bible was not specifically written TO me, BUT it was written FOR me.** This is a very important distinction, but what does it mean?

It means that the Word of God is inspired for people of all generations, however, each book was written within a certain time period to people who lived within that time period. This distinction is incredibly significant because if we do not understand that the words of the Bible were written to a certain people within a certain time, we might misinterpret what is being written for lack of context. If we do not pay attention to the context of what we are reading, we will inevitably misunderstand and misapply scripture in our own lives, and therefore misdirect those whom we disciple.

Homework

Do it Yourself



In the next lesson, we will take some time to get to know the author of Acts, but I'd like for you to do some investigative work on your own.

Read Luke 1:1-4

Does the author identify himself or the audience? If so, list any clues you can find.

When examining the words and phrases in this passage, does the author identify his purpose for writing the letter, and if so what is it? What phrases or words provide you with this information?

Read Acts 1:1-3

Does the author identify himself or the audience? If so, list any clues you can find.

When examining the words and phrases in this passage, does the author identify his purpose for writing the letter, and if so what is it? What phrases or words provide you with this information?

Credits



Caylee Collins
Editor and Creator

Caylee has been a huge help in helping me gather, consolidate, brainstorm and create this study.



Joseph Pope
Podcast Producer

Joseph records and uploads the podcasts for this study and deserved a big mention.



The King Family: Joseph,
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The King family lives in Anderson, SC.



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The photos in this lesson are Photo Photo by John-Mark Smith on Unsplash



Acts Study

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Bibliography

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2018.

Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical Literary and Theological Survey*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

*A quick note on Galatia/Galatians. The debate over the location of the Galatians (whether they were from the southern part of the province where Paul visited on his missionary journey or the Celtics who identified themselves as Galatians from the northern part of the province) may seem petty, but if it can be determined it clarifies the timeframe in which the letter was written, the audience to whom it was written to (those Paul had already visited in the south or a new audience), and helps to clarify how passages in Acts and Galatians concerning his journey fit together. Many of these answers cannot be solidified entirely, but if they can be determined, these details provide valuable contextual information for interpretation. This is the reason for debates like this.