

A Guide to Writing Critical Report

Introduction to the New Testament
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1. Summary (1/3 of the paper): How well conceived the main points/claims/arguments?
Use the following to analyze the text: Argument = claim + evidence = warrant (cf. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995]).
 - A. Claim: “what the author want the readers to believe” (p. 90)
 - B. Evidence: “the reasons the readers should believe it” (p. 90)
 - C. Warrant: “general principle, an assumption or premise that bridges the claim and its supporting evidence, connecting them into a logically related pair” (p. 90)Example from K.K. Yeo, “The Role of Women in 1 Corinthians and ‘Vision 2020’” in *What Has Jerusalem to Do with Beijing?*
 - A. Claim: The apostle Paul is not a sexist but a feminist theologian—Paul “was an eschatological, christological, and mutual egalitarian advocate and practitioner” (p. 286).
 - B. Evidences:
 - It is revolutionary that Paul interprets male-female relationships in terms of mutuality (p. 267).
 - Paul’s use of the word “head” and his reinterpretation of Gen. 2:21-22 and 1:26-28 demonstrate that Paul sees male-female relationship not in terms of subordination/ domination but of differentiation/mutuality.
 - A rhetorical reading of 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 shows that ‘women to be silent’ passage are “not the words of Paul but those of the audience. Paul is *quoting the words of the audience*” (p. 294)
 - C. Warrant: The one who honors the mutuality between male and female and their own uniqueness cannot be a sexist but a feminist.
2. Critical/constructive dialogue with the text (2/3 of the paper): How to or not to live with the text?
 - A. Look at the evidence and warrant see if they are sound and logical, do not focus on the claim. • E.g., do not argue with Yeo if Paul is a feminist, the main argument is if the evidences of mutuality, the word “head” and Gen 1 and 2, and his rhetorical analysis of 1 Cor 14 are plausible.
 - B. In terms of agreement or disagreement, do not simply give the rationale of your feeling. In dialoguing with the text, your best position will be reading the biblical text carefully and consult good commentaries, so that you have other reference points to judge—but you do need to take a position. • E.g.: Most of us are novice, it is good to have Thiselton, Fee, Hays (see their commentaries on 1 Corinthians 11 and 14) to dialogue with Yeo. Bear in mind different readings do not mean that all are correct or only one is right. We are interested in the most plausible reading of the text, taking into consideration the dynamic relationship of text, interpreter, and audience.
 - C. “Critical” does not mean “criticizing”, it means open-minded and constructive in a friendly debate. • E.g.: To narrate how your pastor is a feminist in this section is not helpful (maybe acceptable in preaching). But to debate with Paul in 1 Cor 11 and 14 *how* his ideas/theologies can (or cannot) transform a gender issue of our days will be intriguing. Has Paul something to say (constructively) regarding ordination of women or church leadership? What about regarding wive-husband “headship”? What about “innate nature” of male and female in different fields of academic studies? What about Paul’s “feminism” and our contemporary feminist theologies?