

Big Idea Study Sample

Passage: Colossians 1:15-20 NLT

Big Idea; The supremacy of Christ is revealed by...

Jesus Christ is...supreme... Colossians 1:15

Opening notes;

- The focus on Christ is supported using the title “Christ” and personal pronouns “He, His, Him” mentioned 16x NLT. Note; the big idea is not always the term mentioned most. It just happens to be in this case.
- The idea of supremacy is supported by:
 - the phrase “He is the first in everything” vs. 18b NLT
 - the term “supreme” vs 15 NLT
 - the term “all” (4x/NLT, 8x/Greek) and “everything” 3x NLT

Supporting Idea #1 ...his relationship with God... (vs. 15a,19)

Defining idea #1

- **...because he is God in human form.**
 - Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. (vs. 15)
 - Explain; Jesus is the sinless image (Hebrews 4:15) we are the sinful image (Romans 3:10ff).
 - Illustration; The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God. Hebrews 1:3
 - Apply, let’s look to Christ to know God perfectly

Defining idea #2

- **...because God was glad to dwell in him completely.**
 - For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ (vs. 19)
 - Explain; God gladly and completely inhabited Jesus Christ.
 - Support; For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. Colossians 2:9

- Illustrate; like a complete move-in instead of partial move-in. No storage unit with things held in reserve. God is all in, in Christ.
- Apply; let's look to Christ to see God completely.

Supporting idea #2 ...his relationship with creation... (vs. 15b-,17)

Defining idea #1

- **...because he existed before it all.**
 - He existed before anything was created. (vs. 15b)
 - Explain; eternal pre-existence is an essential requirement for being the creator of all that originally existed. You can't begin to exist after what you created.
 - Illustrate; in the beginning the word already existed. (John 1:1)
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the eternity of the creator

Defining Idea #2

- **...because he rules over it all.**
 - He...is supreme over all creation. (Vs. 15c)
 - Explain; the term "supreme" indicates sovereign rule, absolute authority.
 - Illustrate; The first-born son had special and unique rights by virtue of his birth order. Deuteronomy 21:17
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the authority of the creator.

Defining idea #3

- **...because he is the agent of it all...**
 - through him God created everything (vs. 16a)
 - ...which includes all the material world (things we see)
 - ...which includes all the spiritual world (things we can't see)
 - Explain; there two realms of creation; the visible and invisible but very real.
 - Illustrate; For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12 NLT
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the completeness of the creator.

Defining idea #4

- **...because he is the purpose of it all.**

- Everything was created through him and for him. (vs. 16b)
- Explain; Jesus created everything for his pleasure and glory. — MacArthur
- Illustrate; ...through the Son he (God) created the universe. Hebrews 1:2b
- Apply; let's look to Christ to see the purpose of the creator.

Defining idea #5

- **...because he is the sustainer of it all.**
 - he holds all creation together. (vs. 17b)
 - Explain; He controls the function of atoms to planets and everything in-between.
 - “He makes the universe a cosmos instead of a chaos.”—Lightfoot
 - Illustrate; he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. Hebrews 1:3b
 - Apply; look to Jesus to see the ongoing order of creation.

Supporting Idea #3 ...his relationship with the Church... (vs. 18a)

Defining idea #1

- **...because he authoritatively directs it.**
 - Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. (vs. 18a)
 - Explain; he is the authority and one we take our orders from.
 - Illustrate; just as the head determines what the rest of the body does, Christ determines what the Church does. He directs the Church to make disciples of all nations.
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the source of authority and direction for the Church.

Supporting idea #4 ...his relationship with death... (vs. 18b)

- **Defining idea**
 - **...because he completely conquered it.**
 - He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. (vs. 18b)
 - Explanation; He is the first in the resurrection parade. His death defeated sin and his resurrection defeated death. He is the first to do so. All others are either resuscitations or waited in Hades until Christ rose from the dead.
 - Illustration; But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. 1 Corinthians 15:20 NLT
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the hope of glory.

Supporting idea #5 ...his relationship with salvation... (vs. 20)

- Defining idea #1
 - **...because he is the means of our reconciliation with God...**
 - through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. (vs. 20)
 - Explain; The sacrifice of Jesus established peace where there was once hostility. The death of Jesus Christ ended the hostility between God and us.
 - Illustration; Our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son. Romans 5:10
 - Apply; Let's look to Christ to see the price of our relationship with God.

An alternative approach would be to use the words, who, what, when, where, why, and how as prompts to a set of questions. Pick one question and provide answers. For instance,

- What does reconciliation mean?
- Who have you experienced reconciliation with?
- Where is the best place to experience reconciliation with God?
- When did you experience reconciliation with God?
- Why do we need to be reconciled to God?
- How can we be reconciled with God?

Note the following about the sample Big Idea Study.

1. Notice the large amount of material harvested from these six verses. This would comprise more than one message.
2. The dot, dot, dot (...) method of developing an outline assures the completion of each sentence and full development of thought. It does not have to be included in the outline. It's just there to help the preacher understand the flow. It helps establish the presentation for both the teacher and student. Stating the Main point, the relevant supporting point and corresponding defining point clarifies the message for the speaker and listener. For instance, for the Big Idea/Supporting Point #2/Defining Point #5, you might say, "The supremacy of Christ...is seen in his relationship to creation...because he is the sustainer of it all." Follow this with the explanation, illustration and application of what it means to be the sustainer.

3. The main idea happened to be mentioned several times in the passage. This is not always the case. It is here.
4. There are more than three Supporting Ideas in this passage. Finding three is a good way to know you have found a valid Big Idea. Finding more is even more confirming.
5. Don't let the size of this outline intimidate you. It is amazing how much material can be harvested from one passage, especially the Epistles. They are the richest type of writing in the Bible. Other genres (law, prophecy, history and poetry) may yield less information.
6. For some, the ability to identify a Big Idea, Supporting Ideas and defining ideas is easy. For most, it takes time and practice. If you are the latter don't lose heart. For most it's an acquired skill. Think paragraphs. Look for a key phrase in each paragraph that might serve as a Supporting Idea and then the rest of the words in the paragraph as defining ideas. Let the italic headline of the passage give you an idea of the Big Idea. But be able to identify it within the passage. Remember, passage headlines are not Big Ideas.
7. When looking for the Big Idea remember, the mission of God and the glory of God lay just beneath the surface of all of Scripture. That's because the entire Bible is about the mission of God to make the glory of God known. Be aware of the glory and mission of God.
8. Hermeneutics is both science and art. But it's a science before it's art. The science is developing an outline from the passage (exegesis and hermeneutics), the art is how it's presented (homiletics). Outlines are like snowflakes, no two are alike.
9. There was so much material generated by the information in this passage, there was no need to develop questions. However, it could be done. For instance, using Supporting Point #2 and Defining Point #5, one might ask, "Why is it important to know that Christ holds all creation together?" Answers might be;
 - So, we know he is able to carry out the final plan of God. Revelation 22
 - So, we know he is bringing about the goodness of God. Genesis 50:20
 - So, we know he is guiding us on our journey with God. Matthew 28:20
 - So, we know he is conforming us into the image of the Son of God. Romans 8:29
10. When creating the outline, try to state the Big Idea so that it creates an expectation that is answered by the Supporting Points and Defining Points. Cause your listeners to lean forward in anticipation of the answers that the Big Idea generates. For instance, you'll notice in this outline the Big Idea can be stated as an incomplete thought that is answered by the Supporting

Ideas and Defining Ideas. The Big Idea could be, “The Supremacy of Christ is seen in the following ways...”. The Supporting Ideas answer the question generated by the Big Idea. Sometimes the question is implied (as is the case here with an incomplete sentence), sometimes it is actual by a Big Idea that ends with a question mark.

11. Tie the title of each individual message into the over banner title of a given series. For instance, if you’re teaching through the book of Galatians and pick the banner title, “The Truth of the Gospel Message” from verses 2:5,14 (NLT), you would want to use the phrase “The Truth of the Gospel Message” as a banner title over each individual message. For instance, The Truth of the Gospel Message... (2:5,14 NLT)

...Is seen in three key truths [about the Gospel Message] ... (1:11-24)

#1...it didn’t originate with us... Vs. 11-14

...it didn’t come from individual reasoning

...it didn’t come from human teaching

...it came by direct revelation from Jesus Christ

#2...it must be shared by us... Vs. 15-21

...despite our behavior before we knew Christ

...because it’s why were we're are chosen and called

...based on what we experienced, not training or education.

#3...it totally transforms us... Vs. 22

...from who we were; against Christ

...to who we are; for Christ

...for his glory; because of Christ

12. If possible, tie the title of the Big Idea study into the vision of the church. Show where it fits into the Gather, Grow and Go paradigm.