



Models for Writing Term Papers in Biblical Research: A Practical Guide for Students

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Abstract

Writing term papers in the field of biblical research requires a unique set of skills and approaches to effectively engage with the rich and complex biblical texts. It has been observed that biblical research students often find themselves faced with the daunting task of writing term papers that require a deep understanding of the subject matter and a skilful approach to presenting their findings. To navigate this challenge successfully, it is essential, therefore, to have a solid framework or model to guide biblical research students' writing processes. To this end, the author provides a practical guide for students in this paper and establishes clear models for writing term papers. Thus, the author explores various models for writing term papers in biblical research, using Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) citation style to provide guidance for students seeking to enhance their scholarly work in this field and other related disciplines. The study adopts a simple, structured format for a biblical term paper, which consists of a cover or title page, an introduction, the body of the paper, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The author adopts applied didactic biblical research (ADBR) methodology to practically guide the students. Finally, the author suggests that the writing of a term paper or any research paper is an art that keeps changing, and to know how to write, students must engage themselves in continuous writing, bearing in mind the current term paper writing formats in their disciplines.

Keywords: models for writing term papers, biblical research, practical guide for students, applied didactic research methodology, research paper.

Introduction

Writing term papers in biblical research requires a unique combination of academic rigour, theological insight, and clear communication. Students often struggle to navigate the complexities of biblical research and present their findings in a coherent and compelling manner. This paper aims to provide a practical guide for students, outlining effective models for writing term papers in biblical research. Writing a term paper is an art and a critical task in academic writing, particularly in biblical and theological education. It requires a systematic approach to present research findings, ideas, and arguments in a clear and concise manner. A well-structured model for writing term papers is essential to ensure that the paper is logically organised, easy to follow, and effectively communicates the research objectives and outcomes. The term papers in *biblical research or biblical Christian studies (BCS)*¹, such as biblical Christian education, theology, biblical studies, mission, pastoral chaplaincy, etc., can be divided into five main sections:

- Title /Cover page
- Introduction
- Body of the term paper
- Conclusion
- Reference/bibliography

The cover/title page includes the name of the institution, faculty, department, title of the paper, student's name, course name and number, student's ID/Registration No. or Matric No., instructor's/lecturer's name, and date. *The introduction* sheds light on the problem of the study and highlights the focus and approach to be followed. In other words, this typically includes the background information to the study, the thesis statement, and the overview of the term paper. *The body* of the work is divided into sections on a thematic or periodic basis (if it is historical). *The conclusion* of a term paper in biblical Christian studies is similar to that under the scientific method of investigation. This means that a conclusion must be drawn from the main body of the work. It summarises the main points or restates the term paper thesis statement by reinforcing the main argument or claim. *The bibliography or reference* part of a term paper in biblical research or BCS must follow the SBL citation style, except biblical research students are instructed otherwise. Biblical research students must properly cite and reference all sources

¹ "Biblical Research" or "Biblical Christian Studies (BCS)" is used here by this author to cover all biblically based research or educational studies, such as theology, evangelism, biblical Christian education, Christian counselling, etc.

used in the research, using a recognised citation style in biblical and theological education (e.g., SBL).

It is important to know that before beginning to write, students must understand the assignment and its requirements. Some vital questions to consider include:

- What is the specific topic or research question?
- What are the instructor's expectations for content, structure, and style?
- What are the relevant biblical texts and scholarly resources for the work?
- What is the time frame within which the assignment should be completed and submitted?

The study adopts a simple, structured term paper format, which consists of a cover or title page, an introduction, the body of the paper, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The author employs *applied didactic biblical research methodology (ADBRM)* to practically guide the students. *Applied Didactic Biblical Research (ADBR)* is a type of biblical research design coined and developed by this author to practically teach learners. This type of biblical research design can be used in a research paper that involves practical teaching or demonstration. It is a systematic way of teaching learners directly by demonstration or the practical application of teaching methods and principles to effectively communicate biblical truths and promote spiritual growth. The *Applied didactic research approach or methodology* helps learners to develop a deeper understanding of biblical teachings and their practical applications; it helps learners to engage with the material due to its practical relevance; learners develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills; it improves retention; it fosters transformative learning and spiritual growth of the learners; this research methodology connects theoretical concepts to real-life situations, making learning more relevant, engaging, and effective to learners. Given the nature of this paper, the author adopts this methodology.

Biblical Research Writing, Report, and Paper

Research writing is an essential tool for the documentation of findings or discoveries. This is biblically supported. In biblical research, findings or discoveries usually come in the form of revelations, visions, dreams, or trances, or through the inspired word of God that needs to be documented for an appointed time for the benefit of humanity and to the glory of God (Habk 2:2-3)². Luke

² All biblical quotations in this work are from the King James Version except otherwise indicated

chapter one encapsulates the kind of research writing we intend to practise today. Luke, as a medical doctor, understood the importance of a thorough check-up, review, or examination. He used his skills, as a professional, to engage in thorough observation and analysis to do a complete investigation of the stories handed over to them by the eyewitnesses (the original disciples) about Jesus. Luke was a critical thinker and a thoughtful researcher. He published his findings after a thorough investigation and diagnosis (analysis). He discovered that the stories told about the gospel of Jesus are founded on historical truth (1:1-4).

Thus, our spiritual growth must involve careful, disciplined, thorough investigation of God's Word if we are to make good of our Christian life. Our work with God as Christians must reflect this line of thought. It is therefore advisable to find a research-orientated pastor or teacher who loves to grow in the Word of God or a research book written by a God-fearing author to get you started and guide you in this important part of Christian growth because "biblical research holds the torch of truth" (Dele Alaba Ilesanmi 2024).

Research writing is therefore an important tool because it consists of knowledge of how to write scholarly articles, thesis proposals, and theses or dissertations. Indeed, these are the research writing tasks in which a student of any serious tertiary institution of learning must acquire the necessary skills to satisfy the requirements for the award of a certificate or degree. Given the important role research writing plays in the academic progress of a student and an academic, this work focuses on what it takes to produce an acceptable academic term paper.

The term *research writing* is used in this work to cover both research reports and research papers, including term papers. Research writing presents findings, analysis, recommendations, and conclusions. This includes research papers, term papers, reports, articles, book chapters, theses, and dissertations. Although the concern of this paper is term paper, however, there is a need to explain research reports and research papers as precursors to understanding term papers in research writing.

A *research report* is a specific, detailed, and formal document that presents findings, methods, and conclusions. According to W. Olusola Ibukun (1990), "writing a research report is an art." Thus, he said a research report "has to be learned and imbibed by initiates of research." The main body of the research report normally includes an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussions, recommendations, conclusions, and references. The main focus of the research report is to provide a comprehensive or in-depth account of the research project, such as academic, government, or industry stakeholders, etc.

Research Paper is an academic writing that involves “studious investigation designed to support, refute, or formulate scholarly conclusions” (Benson O. A. Oluikpe, 2004). The research paper sets to present original research work, typically for academic purposes. Its main purpose is to:

- (i) contribute to the existing body of knowledge,
- (ii) lend support to an existing theory, especially if the theory is controversial,
- (iii) debunk an accepted theory,
- (iv) present new insights or formulate new theories
- (v) demonstrate the researcher’s expertise, and
- (vi) fill in an existing gap in scholarship.

Typically, research paper includes introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussions, recommendations, and conclusions. According to Oluikpe (2004), the term paper, thesis proposal, and thesis have features which could be divided into three parts, namely,

- i. Preliminary
- ii. Text
- iii. Reference

However, each of these features differ in detail from one another.

The Term Paper

A *term paper* is a kind of academic writing that normally comes in the form of a written assignment given to students towards the end of a semester or academic term. It is a research-based academic writing that requires students to exhibit their understanding of a particular topic or subject. For example, “The Role of Biblical Research in Biblical Christian Education” or “The Role of Biblical Research in Christian Theology.” A term paper normally carries the following features:

1. *Research-based*: Students are expected to research a particular topic and base their work on credible sources like academic journals, books, and primary sources.
2. *Argumentative or analytical*: In most term paper assignments, students are expected to argue or analyse the research topic rather than just summarise the information.

3. *Formal tone*: The paper is written in a formal tone, avoiding contractions, slang, and personal opinions.

4. *Predefined format*: The term paper may follow a predefined format that may include an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. It typically follows a structured format, which may include a title page, table of contents, introduction (preface) or abstract, body, recommendation, conclusion, and reference/bibliography. The structured format to follow depends on the institution. But, in biblical research, the one treated in this work, the term paper follows a structured format that normally consists of a cover/title page, an introduction, the body of the paper, a conclusion, and a reference or bibliography as mentioned earlier.

5. *Word count/length*: The word count or length varies; however, the general length of a term paper usually ranges between 5-20 pages, depending on the nature of the assignment and the level of study. Typically, the word count is between 1,500 and 5,000 words.

The Purpose of a Term Paper

1. To show the student's understanding of the research topic
2. To enhance critical thinking and analytical capability
3. To improve research and writing skills
4. To evaluate a student's ability to apply theoretical knowledge to a real-life problem

Writing the Term Paper

In academic writing, *the term paper* is quite an important kind of homework assignment that allows students to show their knowledge, skills, and critical thinking in action. It prepares them for lengthy academic writing, such as project work, a thesis, or a dissertation. While a term paper is not a full-fledged research paper, it can be considered a type of research-informed paper or a preliminary research paper. However, it often involves some research and analysis, but the scope and depth of the research are usually limited compared to a full research paper. It should be noted, therefore, that there is no single format for writing a term paper. This is because there is no single research method that suits all areas

of study, especially in theology, biblical Christian education, biblical theology, etc. Generally, the simple term paper contains the following structured format:

I. Cover Page

- Name of the Institution
- Title of the paper
- Student's name
- Course name and number
- Instructor's name
- Date

II. Introduction

- Background information
- Thesis statement
- Overview of the paper

III. Body

- Divided into sections or paragraphs
- Each section supports the thesis statement
- Includes analysis, examples, and evidence

IV. Conclusion

- Summary of the main points
- Restatement of the thesis
- Final thoughts and recommendations

V. References

- List of sources cited in the paper

- Formatted according to the chosen citation style (e.g., SBL, MLA, APA, Chicago, Turabian, etc)

VI. Appendices (optional)

- Additional materials that support the paper
- May include tables, figures, graphs, or raw data.

The above simple term paper structured format will be graphically and chronologically explained for a better understanding of how to write a term paper. Before diving into this, there is a need to discuss the styles of academic or research writing and how to formulate a term paper or research paper topic. The author does not intend to discuss the abstract, literature review, methodology, discussion, and result presentation in this paper. This, the author, intends to deal with in the next paper titled *Models for Writing Biblical Research Papers: A Comprehensive Guide for Biblical Research Students*.

Styles of research writing

In academic writing or papers, which include term papers, it is recommended to avoid using first-person pronouns (such as I, my, mine, or me) and personal gendered pronouns (such as he, she, him, his, or her), instead, authors or writers are advised to opt for neutral or third-person language. Such neutral language as “the researcher,” “the author,” “the investigator,” “the study,” “the paper,” “the research work,” “the data,” etc., and such third-person language as “they,” “them,” “their,” “it,” and “this study” to maintain objectivity and formality. For example, it is not proper professionally to say:

“I conducted a survey on the role of biblical research in Christian theology,” instead say “A survey was conducted to investigate the role of biblical research in Christian theology” or “This study conducted a survey to examine the role of biblical research in Christian theology”

It is professionally improper to write:

"My research found...", instead use "The study revealed..."

“He or she participated...”, instead use “Participants were involved...”

Similarly, the word “people” could be substituted for “man” to further reduce sex bias in research or academic writing. Another vital thing to bear in mind as a term paper writer who is preparing to write an original research paper is the need to avoid all forms of ambiguity in the language of presentation. Indeed, there should be no doubt in the mind of the reader about the points being made (Ibukun, 1990). Finally, students must ensure that their term paper is well-written and formatted according to the instructor's guidelines.

Formulation of the Topic

Formulation of topics in academic or research writing is a critical aspect of our research work. Indeed, the actual presentation of research work starts with the formulation of a good title for our work. The title should be unambiguous—very clear and simple to grasp at first sight—and allow readers to understand quickly what the study is about. A well-crafted and attractive title will spark readers’ curiosity and attention and inspire their interest in the work. According to Joshua Oluwatoyin Adeleke (2010), to search for a good and appealing research title is worthwhile. In Ibukun’s view, “The relationships envisaged between the main variables of the study are often considered in determining the title of the work.” The title should not be too long. Typically, it should not be more than fifteen words. Though the length of a research topic or a research title may vary depending on the discipline, instructor, or institution, we can generally say, as guidelines, that a short and concise title is between 5 and 7 words; a medium-length title can be between 8 and 12 words; and a long and descriptive title can be between 13 and 15 words. For example:

- Short title: "Biblical Research in Christian Education"

-Medium title: "The Place of Biblical Research in the Practice of Christian Education"

- Long title: "Impact of Biblical Research on Chaplaincy: A Critical Analysis of Biblical Research Practice"

It is also important to note that the length of the research topic should be equated with clarity and the specification it provides. A good research topic should not be long, yet it should be short, informative, and directly indicate the direction of the research. Other important factors or qualities of a good research topic to consider are as follows:

1. The selected topic must be researchable i.e. it must be thoroughly explored, analysed, and interpreted.

3. The chosen topic must have enough materials available for discussion.
4. The topic must not be broad or general but must be specific and focus.
5. The chosen title or topic should be relevant and in tune with the modern situation.
6. The research topic must be original. It must not be the one that someone has already discussed.
7. The topic must be feasible and time-bound.
8. The variables or concepts that are to be investigated must be imbedded in the title of the research work.
9. The research title should not be ambiguous and its meaning should not be misunderstood. Use clear and succinct wording.
10. The chosen topic must be congruent with the research objectives and questions
11. The topic must be interesting and drive the researcher to investigate it.
12. The work of the selected research topic must be the one that will add value to other existing information or body of knowledge

Title/Cover Page for Term Papers

A Term Paper Structured Format 1

This term paper structured format can be termed scientific:

I. Title/Cover Page

1. Title of the paper
2. Student's name
3. Institutional affiliation
4. Date

II. Table of Contents (Optional if there are no chapter divisions)

1. List of chapters and sections
2. Page numbers

III. Abstract (abstract preferred if there are no chapter divisions)

1. Brief summary of the paper (150-250 words)
2. Overview of the main points and conclusions

IV. Introduction

1. Background information on the topic
2. Research question or thesis statement
3. Purpose and scope of the paper
4. Overview of the paper's structure

V. Scriptural Review/Christian Literature Review/Extra-Scriptural Literature Review

1. Review of relevant research and studies on the topic
2. Analysis and synthesis of the literature
3. Identification of gaps and limitations in the literature

VI. Methodology (optional in some term papers depending on the institution)

1. Description of the research design and methods
2. Explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures
3. Discussion of the limitations and potential biases of the methodology

VII. Results (optional in some term papers depending on the institution)

1. Presentation of the findings
2. Analysis and interpretation of the results

3. Discussion of the implications of the findings

VIII. Discussion (optional in some term papers depending on the institution)

1. Interpretation of the results in the context of the literature review
2. Discussion of the implications of the findings
3. Identification of areas for future research

IX. Conclusion

1. Summary of the main points
2. Restatement of the thesis statement
3. Final thoughts and recommendations

X. References

1. List of sources cited in the paper
2. Formatted according to the chosen citation style of your institution

XI. Appendices (optional)

1. Supplementary materials that support the research
2. Raw data, extra figures or tables, etc.

XII. Acknowledgement (Optional if there are no chapter division)

Expression of gratitude to individuals or organisations that contributed to the research.

A Term Paper Structured Format 2

The format for a term paper typically includes:

I. Cover Page

- Name of the Institution
- Title of the paper
- Student's name
- Course name and number
- Instructor's name
- Date

II. Introduction

- Background information
- Thesis statement
- Overview of the paper

III. Body

- Divided into sections or paragraphs
- Each section supports the thesis statement
- Includes analysis, examples, and evidence

IV. Conclusion

- Summary of the main points
- Restatement of the thesis
- Final thoughts and recommendations

V. References

- List of sources cited in the paper
- Formatted according to the chosen citation style (e.g., SBL, MLA, APA, Chicago)

VI. Appendices (optional)

- Additional materials that support the paper
- May include tables, figures, graphs, or raw data.

A Term Paper Structured Format 3

I. Cover Page

- Name of the Institution
- Faculty
- Department
- Title of the paper
- Student's name
- Course name and number
- Student's ID/ Registration No. or Matric No:
- Instructor's/Lecturer's name
- Date

II. Introduction

- Background information
- Thesis statement
- Overview of the paper

III. Body

- Divided into sections or paragraphs
- Each section supports the thesis statement
- Includes analysis, examples, and evidence

IV. Conclusion

- Summary of the main points
- Restatement of the thesis
- Final thoughts and recommendations

V. References

- List of sources cited in the paper
- Formatted according to the chosen citation style (e.g., SBL, MLA, APA, Chicago)

VI. Appendices (optional)

- Additional materials that support the paper
- May include tables, figures, graphs, or raw data.

Note: The term paper structured format may differ from one institution to another or from one faculty, department, or course of study to another. The rule is to follow the appropriate style, layout, and adopted format of your institution and course. The author adopts the *Term Paper Structured Format 3* here for biblical research students.

Customised Title Page

Here are the customised samples for a term paper title page. Though a term paper is a type of academic writing, which is the concern of this paper, its cover or title page can be customised in any form depending on the student's course instructor/lecturer, department, faculty, or institution.

1. Simple/Course Format:

Sample of Title/Cover page

Term Paper

The Role of Biblical Research in Christian Theology: A Critical Review

A Term Paper Presented to

Professor Dele A. Ilesanmi, PhD, ThD

Professor of Biblical Research and Biblical Christian Education

Term Paper (BTP 101)

Chosen Life Christian University

By

Ifeanyi Destiny AKOBI

Matric No: CLICU/BR/111-2024

December 2024

2. Departmental Format:

Sample of Title/Cover page

Term Paper

CHOSEN LIFE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Department of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Studies

The Importance of Biblical Research in Evangelism and Discipleship

A Term Paper Presented to

Professor Dele A. Ilesanmi

BTP 101: Term Paper

By

Ifeoluwa Franklin AJAYI

Matric No: CLICU/BR/112-2024

December 2024

3. Faculty/Departmental Format:

Sample of Title/Cover page

Term Paper

CHOSEN LIFE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Biblical Research

Department of Biblical Christian Education

The Role of Biblical Research in Biblical Christian Education

A Term Paper

Submitted in Partial fulfilment of the Requirement for Biblical Research

Writing Skills Course

BTP 101: Term Paper

By

Victor Eniola ADENIYI

Matric No: CLICU/BR/113-2024

Course Lecturer: Pastor Dele A. Ilesanmi, PhD

Professor of Biblical Research and Biblical Christian Education

December 2024

4. Institutional/Detailed Format:



Chosen Life Christian University

Faculty of Theology

Department of Biblical Studies

The Role of Biblical Research in Biblical Theology

A Term Paper Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Course:

Biblical Research Writing 100

By

Olajumoke Morolayo OLOGUNDOYE

PhD Student, Biblical Theology

Student ID Number: CLICU/BR/1234567

Instructor's/Lecturer's Name: Professor Dele Alaba Ilesanmi
Professor of Biblical Research and Biblical Christian Education

December 6, 2024

It should be noted that while writing your names, arrange them in this order: your first name, middle name, and surname. Typically, the student's SURNAME should be written in capital letter as demonstrated above. These are just a few examples; however, the specific requirements may vary depending on the instructor, faculty, department, or institution. Thus, the samples here are not sacrosanct. They are a guide to term paper writing.

Introduction

The introductory aspect of a simple term paper may include background information, a thesis statement, and/or an overview of the paper. This aspect of academic writing in term papers introduces the reader to the problem of the study, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, and sometimes the theoretical frame of reference. The introduction presents the background of the study. The background to the study emphasises the importance of the study and describes the research topic or theme comprehensively to justify the need for the study. It gives contextual information that provides a foundation for understanding the research topic, problem, or question. Background to the study sets the stage for the research work by providing historical, theoretical, or practical context. This will give the reader a better understanding of the entire work.

The introductory part of a term paper also includes a thesis statement that serves as a roadmap for the research work. A thesis statement gives a clear, succinct, and specific or unambiguous statement of a research work's main argument or claim. Thus, a well-crafted thesis statement serves as a guide for the research work and helps to ensure a coherent and focused study.

Furthermore, the methodology adopted for the study is sometimes indicated towards the end of the research introduction—this may not be necessary in a term paper. In essence, in any academic writing, the introduction gives a bird's-eye view of the entire research work, which may be in the form of an abstract at times.

Body

The body of a term paper is divided into sections or paragraphs with a topic sentence starting each paragraph. Each section supports the thesis statement of the paper. The body also includes analysis, examples, and evidence. The body of a term paper is divided into coherent divisions, subdivisions, and sub-subdivisions. The subdivisions, according to need, may further be categorised

into specifics. The problem posed by textual divisions is how the author displays textual divisions and subdivisions to make their degrees of importance readily perceptible to the reader. Oluikpe (2004) asserts that the current practice uses “the principle of decimalisation” to solve the problem of textual divisions. This means that each division is given a corresponding decimal digit. This will start from digit one (1). We may have such digits as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3; 2.1, 2.2, 2.3; 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, etc. The first decimal digit represents a division, the second digit represents a subdivision, and the third decimal digit represents a sub-subdivision. In a paper where the division is about four or more, this may represent a specific. To be an expert in academic writing, such as term papers, research papers for journals, project work, thesis, or dissertation, there must be a continuous reading of authors’ works and continuous writing.

Each division or subdivision of the body of a term paper is headed with a major issue to be discussed under the division. This must be congruous with the research thesis statement. It should be noted here, as earlier pointed out, that literature review, methodology, presentation of results, and discussion of results are not part of the body of a term paper discussed in this work. All these may be included in our term papers, but they may not form separate headings. Again, the format to use depends on the instructor, department, course of study, and institution. However, all these elements are majorly for original research papers.

Conclusion

This final part of a term paper must include the summary of the main points or restate the term paper thesis statement by reinforcing the main argument or claim. This should be drawn bearing in mind the title of the study and the main results, the consequences, or implications of the findings (if any). The author or writer of a term paper may give some recommendations for future original research and offer concluding remarks and insights.

Bibliography (Reference) and Citation style

According to Ilesanmi (2024),³ proper citation is crucial in term paper writing. Thus, the biblical research students need to familiarise themselves with the SBL Handbook of Style (SBLHS), 2nd edition, for guidelines on note and bibliography formatting. First of all, what is **SBL**? SBL is “The Society of Biblical Literature.” It is the style of documentation of sources used by the Society of Biblical Literature, or a style of crediting sources the authors use to write a paper. This style of writing research papers is used mainly in theological or biblical research, such as theology, biblical Christian education, biblical studies, and other Christian religious and theological fields. It is similar to citation styles such as the American Psychological Association (APA), the Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago, Turabian, etc. For example, the APA format is commonly used in psychology, sciences, and other social sciences; and MLA is mainly designed for the arts' style of writing research papers, such as in the English language, mass communication, and other art-related research works. The move by the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) is a good one for Christian scholars to have their own citation style. Biblical Christian scholars cannot remain at the apron string of secular scholars; the reverse should be the case as children of the light who have access to the mysteries of God (Ilesanmi, 2024).

In this work, the author will be using *The SBL Handbook of Style*, Second Edition, 2015 – the current SBL citation style. It is important to note that, as biblical Christian students, theologians, scholars, professionals, and researchers, we need to familiarise ourselves with this style and strictly adhere to its use in all our papers. This will distinguish us as biblical researchers who are divinely called to spread the gospel of Christ through our style of writing and research.⁴

In line with SBL, citations of modern Bible versions do not require the publisher's information in either footnotes or bibliography; instead, authors should use the standard abbreviation for each of the Bible versions, such as KJV, NKJV, NLT, RSV, NRSV, ESV, NIV, NASB, etc. (see *SBLHS* 8.2). If authors are citing scripture from a single version, they should include the abbreviation of the version after the chapter and verse (s) on the first scripture reference only. When citing more than one version in a paper, include the version after each citation. For example,

³ Ilesanmi, Dele. “How to Cite the Bible and Authors in Biblical Research Papers Using SBL Style”. Unpublished Lecture Notes for Executive Diploma Students of ICTSP (2024)

⁴ Ibid.

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim 4:13 KJV).

“Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria” (2 Kgs 10:1 NRSV).

“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:1–2 ESV).

Note that no period or full stop (.) is used after the name of the chapter and the Bible abbreviation. For example, it is wrong to cite the Bible standard abbreviated title (s) or chapter name, such as Gen. 1:1–2 ESV, Tim., 2 kgs., etc. Similarly, no comma (,) is used after the verse (s). It is wrong to cite the Bible like this: 1 Tim. 4:13, KJV.

It should also be noted that when citing specific chapters or chapters and verses, the authors should use the standard abbreviated titles of biblical books provided in *SBLHS* 8.3.1–3. Although an exception to the rule, if a biblical book is the first word of the sentence, such as Genesis, Luke, Hebrew, etc., do not abbreviate it. The following shows the correct and incorrect examples of SBL style:

Correct: Matthew 1 begins with the genealogy of Jesus.

Incorrect: Matt 1 begins with the genealogy of Jesus.

Correct: Revelation 3 begins with the letter to the church in Sardis.

Incorrect: Rev 3 begins with the letter to the church in Sardis.

Furthermore, when writers or authors refer to the book as a whole or a person with the same name as a biblical book (bearing the same name as a book of the Bible), do *not* abbreviate it. For example,

Correct: We know little about the genealogy of the historical Matthew in the book of Matthew.

Incorrect: We know little about the genealogy of the historical Matt in the book of Matt.

Correct: We know little about the historical Habakkuk.

Incorrect: We know little about the historical Hab.

What is more, to cite biblical verses with chapter and verse(s) using Arabic numerals separated by a colon. Do not write out the numbers in words. When referencing consecutive verses, separate the first and last verse numbers with an en dash (–), not a hyphen (-) (see *SBLHS* 2.1.3.4 for further information). For instance,

Correct: Exodus 14:13–14

Incorrect: Exodus chapter fourteen verses thirteen and fourteen.

Incorrect: Exodus chapter fourteen verses thirteen to fourteen.

When authors are citing multiple passages, they should list the abbreviated title of each *new* biblical book followed by the chapter number and colon, with all verses in that chapter separated by a comma and space. A semicolon should separate references to subsequent chapters or books. Do not include the conjunction “and” or an ampersand before the last citation. List passages in canonical and numerical order.

Correct: Matt 2:3; 3:4–6; 4:3, 7; Luke 3:6, 8; 12:2, 5; Acts 15:1–5; Rom 1:8–12

Incorrect: Luke 3:6, 8; Gen 2:3; Luke 12:2; Matt 2:3, 3:4–6; 4:3; Luke 3:6, 8; Rom 1:2–4 and 12:2.

Citing a Book by One or Two Authors

Citing a Book by a Single Author:

Last name of author, First name, followed by *Title in italics*. City/town of Publication: Publisher, Year of publication. For example, to cite this author and his book:

Biblical Research Methodology by Dele Alaba Ilesanmi published by ChristoPress in 2024 in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria:

Ilesanmi, Dele. *Biblical Research Methodology*. Ado-Ekiti: ChristoPress, 2024. 

This is applicable when citing the author under your **Reference/Bibliography**

But, if it is **an in-text citation**, the first time you mention the author's name, it will be written in full with the year of publication and page number in brackets. On the other hand, when you are citing the author the second or subsequent time, you only need to write the surname of the author with the year of publication and page number in brackets. For example:

First time: According to Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (2024:12), “Biblical research holds the torch of truth.”

Second time: Ilesanmi (2024:15) asserts that “The Bible is the only source of God’s revelation to humanity that can be considered reliable, valid, inerrant, and infallible”

Note: If you are quoting from the same book and page, there is no need to mention the year and page number, even name of the author to avoid monotony. For instance:

According to Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (2024:12), “Biblical research holds the torch of truth.” The author further states that ... Moreover, Ilesanmi avers that...

To Cite a Book by two or three Authors:

Citing it under reference, last and first name of author 1, and first and last name of author 2:

Ilesanmi, Dele, and David Ibor. *The Role of Biblical Research in Christian Education*. Ado-Ekiti: ChristoPress, 2023.

Or Ilesanmi, Dele, et. al. *The Role of Biblical Research in Christian Education*. Ado-Ekiti: ChristoPress, 2023.

If it is **in-text citation**, it can be:

Ilesanmi, Dele, and David Ibor (2023:119)...

Or Ilesanmi, Dele, et. al. (2023:119)...

Subsequent mention:

Ilesanmi, et.al. (2023)...or Ilesanmi and Ibor (2023)

Citing a Journal Article

Under Reference Page: Last and first name of author, followed by “Article Title” in double inverted commas or double quotation marks: “”, *Journal Title* in italics, followed by Volume, Series, (Year of Publication) page number of Article if possible:

Ilesanmi, Dele. “Biblical Research: A Theological and Epistemological Inquiry” in *Mature Journal of the International Institute of Christian theologians, scholars, and professionals*, Vol. 2(2), (2024): 1-17

Note that we use **Hanging indent** in the citation style of SBL, but in **Foot note**, we use **First line**. E.g:

Ilesanmi, Dele. “Biblical research: A Theological and Epistemological Inquiry” in *Mature Journal of the International Institute of Christian theologians, scholars, and professionals*, Vol. 2(2), (2024): 1-17

Note that under the reference/bibliography page, citations should be listed in:

- Alphabetical order.
- Single-spaced.
- Hanging indent
- Leave two blank lines between the title and the first entry

For example,

Reference

Ilesanmi, Dele. "Biblical research: A Theological and Epistemological Inquiry" in *Mature Journal of the International Institute of Christian Theologians, Scholars, and professionals*, Vol. 2(2), (2024): 1-17

LeMon, Joe and Brennan W. Breed (eds.). *Student Supplement for the SBL Handbook of Style*, Second Edition. SBL Press: 2015.

It is important to note that when conducting research, the researcher should carefully note all relevant details from *a source's title page* to avoid frustration later. *The source's title page* refers to the page at the beginning of a book, journal, or other published work that contains essential publication information. The source's title page typically includes the following:

- Title of the work
- Author(s) or editor(s)
- Translator (if applicable)
- Volumes
- Series title (if applicable)
- Publisher
- Publication date
- City of publication
- Edition number (if applicable)

This piece of information is vital for citing sources accurately and creating a bibliography or reference list. Thus, the researcher should record them down for correct citation. It is however important to familiarise oneself with SBLHS examples for comprehensive understanding and proper citation.

Conclusion

This write-up has practically guided students on how to write term papers in biblical research by structurally outlining varied models that could help them. The paper adopts the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) citation style to guide students, being the most commonly used in biblical and theological education studies. Writing term papers in biblical research requires careful planning,

research, and writing. By employing effective research methodology (such as the applied didactic biblical research method), writing models, and structural models, students can produce high-quality term papers that demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of biblical research.

Again, writing a term paper, as pointed out in this work, is an art that needs continuous practice. In other words, it can best be acquired by doing rather than solely through reading. Similarly, research students should be aware of the fact that the art keeps changing; therefore, they need to keep pace with the changing formats of term papers and other research papers. However, the format to follow depends on the instructor, department, or institution. By following the practical guidelines outlined in this paper, it is believed that students can excel in their academic pursuits and develop essential skills for academic writing in biblical research.

Reference

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Ilesanmi, Dele. “Biblical research: A Theological and Epistemological Inquiry” in *Mature Journal of the International Institute of Christian Theologians, Scholars, and professionals*, Vol. 2(2), (2024): 1-17

Ilesanmi, Dele. “How to Cite the Bible and Authors in Biblical Research Papers Using SBL Style”. Unpublished Lecture Notes for Executive Diploma Students of ICTSP: 2024.

LeMon, Joe and Brennan W. Breed (eds.). *Student Supplement for the SBL Handbook of Style*, Second Edition. SBL Press: 2015.

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The Author



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