

## Semantic Functions

### The Need for Semantic Functions:

#### Grammatical Diagramming

- “Grammatical diagramming shows how words, phrases, and clauses relate grammatically within sentences,” but it “cannot depict fully ‘meaning’ relationships or exact functions” (p39).
- “For example, grammatical diagramming can depict that one part of a sentence is the object of the main clause, but it cannot show how the whole sentence functions in relation to the next sentence” (p39).
- “It may be able to show the grammatical relationship between a subordinate, adverbial clause and the main verb, but it cannot depict that the main clause is a command and the adverbial clause gives the ‘reason’ why the reader should obey that command” (p39).

#### Semantic Functions

- Semantic functions depict the exact purpose of each phrase, clause, and sentence.
- Learning to identify the function relationships “between various parts of a passage opens a whole new dimension for clarifying and communicating the text” (p39).

### The Process of Semantic Diagramming

- Complete the grammatical diagram.
- Use the Semantics Function list, descriptions, and examples to identify the function of each phrase and clause.
- State the semantic function in the column to the left of the grammatical diagram.
- The semantic diagram (the grammatical diagram with the semantic functions listed) will provide clarity in moving from the diagram to the passage outline.

**Foundational Expressions  
(Independent Clauses)**

Assertion  
Event or Action  
Rhetorical Question  
Desire (wish/hope)  
Exclamation  
Exhortation  
(command/encourage)  
Warning  
Promise  
Problem/Resolution  
Entreaty  
Rebuke

**Related to Events/Actions  
(Dependent/Supporting  
Clauses/Phrases)**

Time (when)  
Simultaneous  
Sequence (order)  
Place  
Sphere  
Source  
Circumstance  
Means  
Manner  
Measure  
Agency (“by”/ “through”)  
Reference  
Relationship  
Possession  
Advantage/Disadvantage  
Cause  
Purpose (“that”)  
Result (“that”)

**Related to Argument/Discussion (Logic)**

Basis  
Condition  
Contrast/Comparison (“but”)  
General/Specific

**Clarification**

Restatement  
Description  
Identification  
Illustration  
Apposition  
Explanation  
Alternative  
Question/Answer  
Verification

## **Foundational Expressions (Independent Clauses)**

**Assertion** (“I am the true vine”)

**Event or Action** (“And the life was manifested” – 1 John 1:2))

**Rhetorical Question** (For to which of the angels did he ever say “You are my son”? – Heb 1:5a)

**Desire** - wish/hope (“But I hope to see you soon” – 3 John 14a)

**Exclamation** (“I am a miserable man” – Rom 7:24a)

**Exhortation** (command/encouragement) (“Get behind me, Satan!” – Mark 8:33)

**Warning** (“For if we go on sinning deliberately...a sacrifice for sins no longer remains” – Heb 10:26)

**Promise** (“I will never leave you, nor will I abandon you” – Heb 13:5b)

**Problem/Resolution** (“And you were dead in your wrong deeds and sins...But God... made us alive together with Christ” – Eph 2:1-5)

**Entreaty** (“Give us this day our daily bread” – Mt 6:11)

**Rebuke**

## **Related to Events/Actions (Dependent/Supporting Clauses or Phrases)**

**Time** (when) – A simple statement of the time an event, action, or state occurred. It answers the question, “When did this occur?” (“Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them off” – Acts 13:3).

**Simultaneous** - Two or more events or states expressed as happening at the same time. (“Then when they had fasted and laid hands on them...” – Acts 13:3)

**Sequence** (order) – Two or more events happening expressed as happening one after the other. (“And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve – 1 Cor 15:5)

**Place** – Location; where the event, action, or state occurred. Answers the question “where?”

**Sphere** – The domain or realm of existence; “in.” (But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit” – Rom 8:9a)

**Source** – The point of origin answers the question “from where?” (Now we have this treasure in earthen vessels...” – 2 Cor 4:7).

**Circumstance** – Situations surrounding events or actions (“leaving all they followed him” – Lk 5:11)

**Means** – (“by”/ “in”) – The tool or instrument used in carrying out an action. Answers the question, “How did this person do that?” (By the grace of God, I am what I am” – 1 Cor 15:10a)

**Manner** (“how”) – How the instrument is used. Answers the question “in what way did he do this?” (“Only that in every way whether with false motives or truth, Christ is being preached” – Phil 1:18)

**Measure** – Answers the question “How long?” “how many?” or “how far?” (“Why have you been standing here unemployed the whole day?” – Mt 20:6)

**Agency** – (“by”/ “through”) - The personal agent who performs the action. Answers the question “By whom?” or “Through whom?” (“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” Rom :1).

**Reference** – An expression of relation. Answers the question “With reference to whom or what” (“You lay aside with reference to your former way of living the old man” Eph 4:22).

**Relationship** – Expresses some form of personal relationship. (“We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” – Col 1:3)

**Possession** – Expresses ownership (“And also to the one wishing to sue you and to take your tunic, to him give your cloak too” – Mt 5:40)

**Advantage/Disadvantage** – For whom or against whom an action takes place (“For on behalf of a good person someone might even be brave enough to die” – Rom 5:7)

**Cause** – An event or state that produces some result. Answers the question, “What brought this about?”

**Purpose** – (“that”) – An outcome that one intends to take place or the motive for an action. Answers “What did this person wish to accomplish?” or “Why did he or she do that?”

**Result** – (“that”) - An outcome of some action or attitude. (“...Your Father who sees in secret will repay you” – Mt 6:6)

## **Related to Argument/Discussion - Logic**

**Basis** – The grounds on which a statement or command is made (“For the one having entered into his rest also has rested from his own works as God did from his” – Heb 4:10-11)

**Condition** – (“if”) – A requirement (“If anyone does not stumble in speech this one is a mature person” – James 3:2)

**Contrast/Comparison** – (“but”) – Two conditions, ideas or actions put together in order to point out differences or similarities (“For this reason do not be foolish but discern what the will of the Lord is” – Eph 5:17 [contrast])

**General/Specific** – The juxtaposition of “general” and “specific” shows the relationship between a broader and a more particular concept, truth, or action (“And no one grabs this honor for himself, but being called by God even as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself to become a high priest” – Heb 5:4-5)

## **Clarification**

**Restatement** – The same idea is expressed in a different way (“I will be merciful towards their unrighteous acts, and I will no longer remember their sins” – Heb 8:12)

**Description** – Provides vivid detail of a person, event, state, or object (“And behold a large red dragon having seven heads and ten horns” – Rev 12:3)

**Identification** – Information used to specify a person or thing. Answers the question “which one?” (“Now there was a man who was a member of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, who was a ruler of the Jews” – John 3:1)

**Illustration** – Material used to elucidate by use of an example (“But be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For God having promised to Abraham...swore by himself.... Abraham obtained the promise” – Heb 6:12-15).

**Apposition** – A noun or participle that follows immediately another noun or participle with which it shares a common referent (“For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus...” – Eph 3:1).

**Explanation** – (“for”) – The addition of clarifying statements to a main proposition or command. (“But as you are praying, do not babble like the Gentiles, for they think that by their many words they will be heard” – Mt 6:7).

**Alternative** – (either... or) – When one condition, action, or place is expressed as a possible substitute for another (“For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one... - Mt 6:24).

**Question/Answer** – An expression of inquiry and the response to an inquiry (“And he asked them, “Why do you say that I am?” Peter answering said to him, “You are the Messiah” – Mk 8:29)

**Verification** – Shows the validity of an assertion by providing some form of corroborating evidence (“For it was not David who ascended... ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand...” – Acts 2:35 [Here Paul uses Ps 110:1 to verify his assertion about Jesus’ exaltation]).