

Understanding a Theological Personal Reflection

- Every theological essay you write for ANLI has a reflection component. Reflection is essential to thinking about theology. It begins in prayer, listening to God and following the direction of the Holy Spirit.
- The personal reflection essay asks you to respond to a situation, based on biblical truth. The purpose is to illuminate a situation in the context of Scripture. You write the essay from your perspective, in personal voice. (Be careful that you don't lapse into the third person or begin too many sentences with the word "I.")
- While the structure of your reflection essay is important, the key aspects of the essay are elaboration, connections, and personal self reflection. A very simple way to think about the structure of a short essay is to design it with five paragraphs in mind.

Check List Question Guide

Paragraph One. This is your introductory paragraph. It contains the main idea, overarching point of the essay. Along with the main idea are the key points. The key points break out your main idea. Your introductory paragraph launches your paper, so you want to add something with pizzazz to it. This is called an attention getter. Sometimes people incorporate a relevant quote, Scripture or an opening thought that propels the main idea and key points.

- What is the main idea?
- What are the three key points?
- What is your attention getter?

Paragraphs Two through Four. These paragraphs comprise the body of your essay. These paragraphs explain the key points of the essay. Take one paragraph per key point. Begin the paragraph with one of the key points from the introductory paragraph. (This key point becomes the topic sentence of the paragraph.) Then, support that point. Do not write in a direction different from the topic sentence that contains the particular key point. That's called going off topic. I refer to it as bird walking.

- What are the topic sentences (key points) in each of your body paragraphs?
- Did you stay on topic in each paragraph? Why or why not?

Paragraph Five. This is your closing. It restates your thesis with findings. Also, the closing pulls your paper to together into one, cohesive unit. Without it, the paper is left in an unfinished state.

(Griggs & Griggs, 2011)