

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL IT'S WORTH

17 February 2021 | Week 5: Epistles

REVIEW OF STUDY QUESTIONS: JOEL 2

I. Introduction

1) What is an Epistle?

A divinely inspired letter with an understood wider significance (I Cor. 14:37; I Thess. 5:27)

- Public or private address

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house - Philemon 1:1-2

- Occasional in Nature
- Understood as Divinely Authoritative

*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, **as they do the other Scriptures.** - 2 Peter 3:15-16*

2) List of NT Epistles

Pauline Epistles: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

General Epistles: Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude

II. General Structure of Epistles

- 1) Salutation (sender, recipient & greeting)
- 2) Thanksgiving & Prayer
- 3) Body
- 4) Exhortations
- 5) Closing (final greetings and benediction)

Foundational doctrine → Practical application

III. Interpreting New Testament Epistles

- 1) Tracing the Argument (finding the connecting words)

- Cause (*because, for, since, by, on account of*)

*...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³**for** it is God who works in you, both to will and to work **for** his good pleasure. - Phil. 2:12a-13*

- Result (*so that, that, therefore, accordingly*)

*For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, **so that** we need not say anything. - I Thess. 1:8*

- Purpose (*in order that, so that, that, "to" plus infinitive*)

*For I long to see you, **that** I may impart to you some spiritual gift **to** strengthen you - Rom. 1:11*

- Condition (*If, if while, unless, if then*)

***If then** you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God - Col. 3:1*

- Concession (*Even if, if, despite, yet, although, apart*)

*But **even if** we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. - Gal. 1:8*

- Means (*by, by which, in, through, by means of*)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. - Eph. 2:8-9

- Manner (*by, with, by means of, in, from*)

*our gospel came to you not only **in** word, but also **in** power and **in** the Holy Spirit and **with** full conviction. - I Thess. 1:5*

- Ground (*for, because, since*)

*But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. **For** it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

- Series (*likewise, and, moreover, furthermore, nor, neither*)

***Likewise**, wives, be subject to your own husbands... **Likewise**, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way - I Peter 3:1a, 7a*

- Progression (*then, and, moreover, furthermore, nor*)

***And** those whom he predestined he also called, **and** those whom he called he also justified, **and** those whom he justified he also glorified. - Rom. 8:30*

Tracing the Argument (continued)

ROMANS 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

2) Poetic Elements in Epistles

- Metaphors

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens
 - 2 Cor. 5:1*

- Rhetorical Questions

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? - Rom. 6:1-3*

- Paradox

For when I am weak, then I am strong. - 1 Cor. 10b

- Proverbial Writing (memorable)

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. - Jam. 4:8a

3) Word Study

- Words have semantic ranges and levels, but a particular nuance of a term must be gleaned from the context where it is found.
 - Ex. Salvation, sanctify
- Not all authors use words in the same way, therefore, seek to understand how this author uses a particular word
 - Ex. Justify (Rom. 3:28, Jam. 2:24)

4) Historical Context

- What is explicit?
 - Seek to understand the written text before drawing conclusions about the situation
- How do you discern whether a NT author is speaking to an historical context that is ever changing and when they are speaking to a transcendent principle?
 - i. Pay attention to where the author grounds his argument
 - ii. We are not commanded to replicate 1st century culture, but the burden of proof remains on the cultural interpretation
 - iii. When you're convinced a passage is speaking to a cultural issue, is there a timeless truth or principal the NT writer is getting at?

Ex. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. - 1 Cor. 8:13

Ex. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments - 2 Timothy 4:13

5) Christological Context

I CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

CASTLETON CORE: WEEK 5

How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth | Study Questions | I Corinthians 5

1. What historical context is needed to help you understand this passage? Are there any clues about the circumstances in which this letter was written? Take note of the genre to help narrow your search.
2. What is the main point of the text immediately before this passage? Is there logical connection between these passages?
3. Are there any connecting words that indicate a logical flow of argument? (i.e., for, therefore, so that, but, because, etc.) What other literary devices are used to make his argument?
4. What is the main point(s) the author is trying to make?
5. What role does this passage play in the broad scope of the biblical storyline? How does this passage connect to Christ?
6. How does this passage challenge the way you think about God? How does this passage challenge the way you live?

Cited & Suggested Resources for Further Study

Books

ESV study Bible: English Standard Version. (2011). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Fee, G. D. (1993). *How to read the Bible for all it's worth: A guide to understanding the Bible.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Goldsworthy, G. (2012). *Gospel and kingdom.* Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.

Helm, D. R. (2011). *One to one Bible reading: A simple guide for every Christian.* Kingsford, N.S.W.: Matthias Media.

Packer, J. I., Sproul, R. C., & Kiple, C. (2009). *Knowing Scripture.* InterVarsity Press.

Plummer R. (2010). *40 questions about interpreting the Bible.* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal.

Roberts, V. (2012). *God's big picture: Tracing the storyline of the Bible.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, InterVarsity Press.

Schreiner, T. R. (2011). *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Online Resources

"Look at the Book." <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs>

Lexham Bible Dictionary. <https://www.logos.com/product/36564/lexham-bible-dictionary>