



# Understanding and Applying the Bible

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# Schedule

- Jan 22nd Understanding God's Law
- Jan 29th Understanding Historical Narrative
- Feb 5th Understanding the Psalms
- Feb 12th Understanding Wisdom Books
- Feb 19th Understanding the Prophets
- Feb 26th Understanding the Gospels
- Mar 5th Understanding Parables
- Mar 12th Understanding Acts
- Mar 19th Understanding the Epistles**
- Mar 26th Understanding Revelation (Apocalyptic)



# Epistles

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- Name
  - Paul, Silas and Timothy,
- Recipient
  - To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
- Greeting
  - Grace and peace to you.
- Prayer wish or thanksgiving (sometimes missing)
  - We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. (1 Thessalonians 1:1-2)
- Body
- Final greeting and farewell



# Epistles

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Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 2:3)

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. (2 Tim 4:13)



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Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. (1 Tim 4:13)

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. (1 Tim 5:23)



# Epistles



## **From interpretation to application:**

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Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Col 3:12-14)

Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph 5:1-2)

2. If there are cultural factors that are different than us today, we need to diagnose the cultural context and determine the underlying principle behind the writer's words to the original hearers.

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head. (1 Cor 11:2-6)

3. The meaning of the text is what the author meant when he wrote it to the original readers. The author assumed they would understand him. Therefore, the text cannot mean something the author and readers could not have understood.

For we know in part and prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with. (1 Cor 13:9-10; NASB)



4. Once we isolate the principle behind the text, we can start to ask the question what the principle means to us, and how we can act on it. That principle can give rise to many applications that are specific to our culture.



# Epistles

## Reading the epistles and listening to the Spirit

- I. When you study the epistles, it's helpful to use two translations—one with formal equivalence (i.e., word-for-word, like the NASB) and one with dynamic equivalence (i.e., concept-by-concept, like the NIV). This is because many of the epistles are written in Greek, which has flexibility in how it is translated into English. English is much simpler than Greek.



2. Read the epistle as a whole, to get a sense of the big picture. Then read it in chunks (i.e., paragraphs). As you read, apply the following two ideas:

### TRUTH

What truth does the author want his readers to know/remember/accept?

and/or

What falsehoods or lies does the author want his readers to reject?

### BEHAVIOR

In light of the truth, what behavior does the author want his readers to adopt?

and/or

In light of the truth, what behavior does the author want his readers to avoid?

3. Try to read individual verses in light of the larger context (e.g., read them in line with the whole paragraph) to derive the correct principle.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil 4:13; NASB)

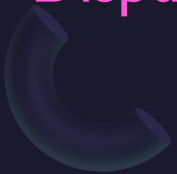
Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my difficulty. (Phil 4:11-14; NASB)

# Canon

Canon means *rule*. All the books currently included in the New Testament were the ones almost everyone thought were inspired Scripture, from the earliest time. The books not included were ones almost everyone thought should not be included (though some were popular and sometimes quoted). All of them exist today to make our own determination, if we have any doubts. Any sense that there was a big battle at the point the official New Testament canon was finalized is incorrect.

Primary “rule”: Apostolic authorship.

“Disputed” books: Hebrews, James, 2 & 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation



# Background to Ephesians 3:14-4:5

<sup>8</sup> Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> God did extraordinary **miracles** through Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the **evil spirits** left them.

# Background to Ephesians 3:14-4:5

<sup>13</sup> Some Jews who went around driving out **evil spirits** tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” <sup>14</sup> Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. <sup>15</sup> One day the **evil spirit** answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” <sup>16</sup> Then the man who had the **evil spirit** jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

<sup>17</sup> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, **they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.** <sup>18</sup> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. <sup>19</sup> **A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.** When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. <sup>20</sup> In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in **power.** (Acts 19:8-20)



# Sample Passage: Ephesians 3:14-4:5

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen** you with **power** through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in **love**, <sup>18</sup> may have **power**, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the **love** of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this **love** that **surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him **who is able to do immeasurably more** than all we ask or imagine, according to his **power** that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:17-21)

# Sample Passage: Ephesians 3:14-4:5

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:1-5)

