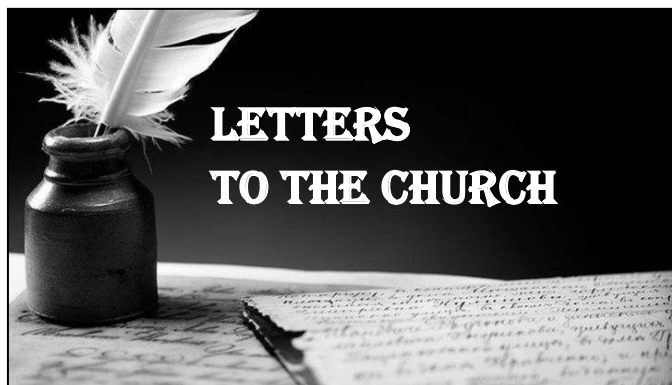


Ignite Week 15 – Epistles

Teen Handout 3/6/2022



An Epistle is...

1. a writing directed or sent to a person or group of people, usually an elegant and formal [didactic](#) letter.
2. a poem or other literary work in the form of a letter or series of letters began with the Egyptians and were a major genre of literature among the Greeks and particularly the Romans.
3. The New Testament Epistles are letters written to the fledgling churches and individual believers in the earliest days of Christianity.

The purpose of an Epistle is...

- to teach, often to convey a moral lesson
- to convey instruction and information
- to make moral observations
- to give advice or counsel
- to settle disputes
- to encourage and/or strengthen resolve

Letter writing in the first century was an expensive and time consuming process. Yet, correspondence between churches and between Christians was vital to the early church, Early Christian missionaries and leaders, carried letters throughout the Roman Empire, maintaining networks of communication between churches. We possess more than nine thousand letters written by the early Christians and thousands more have not survived.

Why do you think this was important?

The Pauline Epistles

St. Paul wrote 13 epistles or letters, each addressing a specific situation or problem. In terms of volume, Paul's writings constitute about one-fourth of the entire New Testament. These letters give us insight not only into Paul's vision of the gospel but also into the world of the early church.

Romans
Galatians
Thessalonians 1 & 2

Corinthians 1 & 2
Colossians
Hebrews

Four of Paul's letters were composed while he was confined in prison. These are known as the **Prison Epistles**

Ephesians
Colossians

Philippians
Philemon

Three letters, the **Pastoral Epistles**, were directed toward church leaders and discuss ministerial matters.

Timothy 1 & 2 **Titus**

Several of Paul's letters have not been preserved. These are known as the **Lost Letters**. We know about these letters because they are mentioned in the letters we do have

A first epistle to Corinth - see [1 Corinthians 5:9](#)

A third epistle to Corinth - see [2 Corinthians 2:4](#)
And [2 Corinthians 7:8-9](#)

An earlier epistle to the Ephesians – see [Ephesians 3:3-4](#)

The Epistle to the Laodiceans – see [Colossians 4:16](#)

The General Epistles

are the six New Testament letters written by James, Peter, John, and Jude. They are also known as Catholic Epistles. These epistles, with the exception of John 2 and 3, are addressed to a general audience of believers rather than to a specific church.

James,
John 1, 2, and 3

Peter 1 & 2
Jude

Lasting Influence Activity

Quiz 1

A. Name the last three World Series Champions.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

B. Name the three wealthiest people in the world.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

C. Name three people who have won the Pulitzer or Noble Peace price.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

D. Name three American Presidents.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

E. Name the last three movies that won an Oscar for best picture.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Quiz 2

A. Name three people who have helped you through a tough time.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

B. Name three people who have inspired you with their lives.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

C. Name three people who have made you feel special.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

D. Name three people who taught you something worthwhile.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

E. Name three people with whom you can share your secrets.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

“IT'S TIME TO TALK”

Lasting Influence Discussion Questions:

1. Which quiz was easier? Why?
2. What is it about the people in the second set of questions that makes them so special?
3. What stands out about them?
4. What person or group do you think are making a real difference in people's lives today?
5. For whom are you a major influence? Why?

Understanding the Epistles

Hey Pinto Bean - I have been starting (actually, trying is a better word) to read St. Paul's epistles and I am having a hard time. What should I be looking for to help me understand specific letters better?

I'm so glad you asked this question.

St. Paul's epistles make up a substantial part of the New Testament. In addition, they offer incredibly important insight into the minds, hearts and traditions of the early Church.

When we read St. Paul's epistles, we read more than nice letters to communities throughout the Mediterranean world...we are reading and hearing the very voice of God through the pen of Paul.

I'm going to list out a few bullet points for each of St. Paul's epistles below. These won't answer all of your questions but hopefully they will give you a solid "jumping off point" as you start to read and navigate through the books on your own.

Don't be intimidated, the hardest part is over...asking for help. Now, take advantage of all of the texts out there that are designed to help you get more out of God's word.

Here goes:

1st Thessalonians

- How to deal with attacks
- God's grace to help you live the Christian life
- The fact that with the Holy Spirit, comes power to withstand anything
- Talks about Christ's return, and how to be ready for his coming – to live and act morally...especially sexually

2nd Thessalonians

- Encouraging them to pray for God's divine strength
- To be on guard against false teachers, voices and cultural trends
- Deliverance from sin, wickedness and a reliance on prayer
- Abandonment to living for Jesus in the face of temptation, peer pressure and sin

1st Corinthians

- Speaking out against immorality
- Condemning lives led for false gods
- Discussing the dangers of dissension within the Church
- Recognizing your spiritual gifts, and warning against wasting the gifts God has given you
- Remembering the truth about the resurrection and looking forward to the 2nd Coming

2nd Corinthians

- Love for the Church
- Caution about discerning the truth and false apostles who lead you astray
- Conflict resolution and crisis intervention within the believers
- Proof of the apostleship and authority of Paul

Galatians

- The importance and power of (Paul's) testimony
- Living in freedom, living in the Gospel – the battle has been won by Christ Jesus
- Getting “right” with God, by faith in Christ Jesus, His grace makes you righteous
- Correcting misunderstandings about what a life in Christ really means
- The importance of faith and of community

Philippians

- The joy of the Christian message and the joy for those who live it out, authentically
- The importance of humility and of unity
- The grace that comes with obedience, service
- Warnings against false teachers
- An exhortation to truly Christian conduct

Romans

- The freedom that comes with life in Christ
- The need to resist indoctrination that is not of God
- Salvation by God's grace, not by works
- The relationship between your soul and your body, between love/grace and sin/temptation
- Your relationship to God (as mirrored through Israel's)
- The call for all to live out sacrifice in their personal lives, to seek salvation and to be obedient, self-aware and loving in all ways

Ephesians

- The need to trust in God's plan for you, fulfilled in Christ and guided by the Spirit
- The importance of unity with other believers, the greater Church
- A greater awareness of our commissioning by God, and our need to recognize and use all our spiritual gifts – putting our vocation at God's service
- The mission of the Church, God's plan and purpose for us
- How to live in relationships – husband/wife, parent/child, brother/sister, friend/friend
- Standing strong in the face of evil/temptation

Colossians

- The power of Christ (His redemptive power) in you; the importance of Baptism
- Focus on your faith in Jesus, not on stupid traditions/superstitions
- The need to avoid things that are contrary to the Christian life, the importance of love
- Living a virtuous life – how to do it
- The need to pray and to be guided by the Spirit

St. Paul was writing to people just like you and me; their struggles were not much different than ours, even though culturally speaking there are huge differences.

Concentrate on the doctrines he is teaching, not the cultural disciplines of the day. For help with that, get a good Catholic Study Bible and be sure to spend time reading the introductions and footnotes to each epistle.

And have fun...Bible study doesn't have to be boring. If it's not interesting, take some time to pray, and find a way to make it more enjoyable. God's plan isn't to bore you, it's to save you.

Accessed on line at <http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/youth/biblegeek/56.asp>

Speaking our minds

Each Ignite group will write their own epistle to the Holy Family Community.

Step 1: Choose a theme

What message do we want to communicate to our parish community?

What advice do we have to offer about being a church?

Is there a particular issue the parish is facing we think is important and what wisdom do we have to offer?

Is our parish community in need of encouragement or appreciation that we could offer?

Step 2: Follow the format of the NT epistles

I) Letter Beginning	II) Letter Body	III) Letter Conclusion
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sender(s): From whom2. Recipient(s): To whom3. Formal Greeting4. Thanksgiving (or Blessing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initial slogan or motto2. Main message3. Reasons for the message or why the message is important4. Warning about what could happen if the message is ignored	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Practical Matters2. Individual Greetings3. Personal Postscript4. Doxology (or Prayer)

Step 3: Divide up the sections of the letter to different members of the group

Step 4: Come together and read each section out loud.

Step 5: Make any final edits

Step 6: Turn your epistle into Teen Faith at the end of class