

3. Love Letters

(The Epistles – doing exegesis!)

Introduction

Epistle (Greek) = **Letter** (English)

- everything but the Gospels and Revelation
- some are more public, others more personal
- Exegesis easy? Hermeneutic difficult?

We will have a crash-course in 1 Corinthians...

1. The Nature of the Epistles

Ancient letters typically have this format:

1. The name of the writer
2. The name of the recipient
3. Greeting
4. Prayer wish or Thanksgiving
5. Body
6. Final Greeting or Farewell

All epistles are from the **first century**

All epistles are **occasional documents**

All epistles are applied to a **particular need**

2. Get an overview

Firstly, find out the situation.

Activity: In a range of photocopied pages from commentaries and dictionaries, can you sum up what Corinth was like?

Secondly, read the whole letter in one sitting (takes about an hour). Why do this?

Thirdly, note down the following:

1. The recipients
2. The writer's attitude
3. The occasion of the letter
4. The outline of sections

TIP: Ignore chapter and verse numbers (added in medieval times). However, the headings (added in recent times) may help.

3. How to do an exegesis!

The Method is:

1. Identify the problem
2. Discover the point of each **paragraph**
3. Relate each point to the problem

1. What is the nature of the problem?

Activity: Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 3:5-23. What is the nature of the problem? Summarise this.

2. What is the point of each paragraph?

Activity: Read each of the following paragraphs and note the point of each paragraph:

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

3. How does each point relate to the problem?

Activity: Take the summary of each point produced in the previous activity and relate it to the summary of the problem.

Yes, we did it! Well done!

Note: We have done the first bit (exegesis) but we have not yet applied the text to our lives (hermeneutics). We haven't yet asked "what does this mean for us today?"

However, you've done enough for today. We'll take a look at that next week...