

SHEFFEY BIBLE COLLEGE

Course: Hermeneutics 102

Chapter 14 Student Handout

NEW TESTAMENT—LETTERS

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

WHAT YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM TODAY'S LECTURE

- Understand the nature of New Testament letters.
- Identify the major characteristics of New Testament letters.
- Understand how New Testament letters were prepared and delivered.
- Recognize the basic structure of a New Testament letter.
- Learn the importance of historical-cultural context.
- Apply the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to New Testament letters.

I. THE NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Key Principle

New Testament letters are inspired communications written to real believers facing real situations.

Short Explanation

Twenty-one books of the New Testament are letters written to churches and individuals. These letters communicate doctrine, correction, encouragement, and instruction.

Notes

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Key Principle

New Testament letters communicate timeless truth through specific historical situations.

Short Explanation

The letters are authoritative, situational, and practical.

Important Definitions

Epistle: A written communication sent to instruct, encourage, correct, or exhort.

Situational: Written to address a specific historical circumstance or need.

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III. THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Key Principle

The New Testament letters were carefully composed and faithfully delivered.

Short Explanation

Many letters were written through secretaries and delivered by trusted coworkers.

Important Definition

Amanuensis: A secretary or scribe who wrote a letter for the author.

Notes

IV. THE FORM OF NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Key Principle

Understanding the structure of a letter helps reveal the author's message.

Short Explanation

Most letters contain:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

Important Definition

Benediction: A concluding blessing pronounced upon God's people.

Notes

V. RECONSTRUCTING THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Key Principle

Proper interpretation requires understanding the original situation behind the letter.

Short Explanation

Interpreters must identify the author, audience, purpose, and circumstances behind the letter.

Notes

VI. INTERPRETING NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Key Principle

The Interpretive Journey remains the foundation for understanding New Testament letters.

Short Explanation

The five steps of the Interpretive Journey guide proper interpretation and application.

Important Definition

Theological Principle: A timeless truth reflected in the meaning of a biblical text.

Notes

VII. HEBREWS 12:1–2 AS A MODEL OF INTERPRETATION

Key Principle

Faithful interpretation leads to faithful application.

Short Explanation

Hebrews 12:1–2 teaches that believers must endure faithfully, learn from godly examples, and focus upon Christ.

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THINGS TO KNOW (EXAM ANCHORS)

1. Define epistle.

2. Explain why New Testament letters are situational documents.
3. Explain why New Testament letters carried authority.
4. Define amanuensis.
5. Explain the role of coworkers in preparing and delivering letters.
6. Identify the three major parts of a New Testament letter.
7. Define benediction.
8. Explain the importance of historical-cultural context.
9. Explain the “one side of a telephone conversation” illustration.
10. List the five steps of the Interpretive Journey.
11. Define theological principle.
12. List the characteristics of a valid theological principle.
13. Explain why entire letters should be read before studying individual passages.
14. Explain the main theme of Hebrews 12:1–2.
15. Identify the three theological principles drawn from Hebrews 12:1–2.

Closing Summary

New Testament letters are authoritative and situational communications written to address the needs of believers and churches. By understanding their structure, historical setting, and theological message, believers can accurately interpret and faithfully apply God's Word today.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Chapter 15 in *Grasping God's Word* in preparation for the next lecture.