

Understanding the Epistles

Epistles account for about half of content in the New Testament.

What are the Epistles? Letters

Not a homogenous group, but various kinds of letters.

"In the ancient world, letter writing was largely a substitute for personal presence."

**Wright & Bird,
The New Testament in Its Setting**

Ancient Greco Roman letters avg 90 words.
NT letters 335-714 words.

- **Didactic**
 - they are intended to teach us, to give us instruction.
- **Orthodoxy** (right believe)
- **Orthopraxy** (right practice)
- **Orthopathy** (right experience)

DAY 30

Though the epistles are intended to articulate doctrine and guide behavior and regulate experience, there is a danger present in thinking every word written is for us to apply in a most direct and literal fashion.

All are occasional letters of the 1st century.

We often don't get a full picture of what the occasion for the letter is.

Philip Johnston says to ask: **what, why, how.**

"Problems arise when we move too quickly from the 'what?' to the 'how?'"

Philip Johnston

1

What

Remember, a text can never mean to us what it could not have meant to the original reader.



1 Corinthians 13:10 "When the perfect comes the imperfect will be done away with."

2

Why

Setting. Know what kind of setting it applies to.

3

How

Where our situation overlaps their situation, the same applications bear weight on us.

What is your one takeaway from this session?

