**THE NATURE OF THE EPISTLES**

1. Epistle: a type of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intended to be read and understood by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Epistles make up \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the New Testament
3. Here is the general format:
   1. Name of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Name of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the intended audience)
   3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – their way of saying hello
   4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wish or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – a prayer for their blessing or a thanksgiving to God
   5. Body of the epistle – this is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the epistle
   6. Final greeting or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Example: 1 Peter
   1. Name of the Writer – 1:1
   2. Name of the Recipient – 1:1-2
   3. Greeting – 1:2
   4. Prayer Wish / Thanksgiving – 1:3-5
   5. Body – 1:6-5:11
   6. Final Greeting / Farewell – 5:12-14
5. In addition to similarity in form, all epistles have two traits in common.
6. **1** All were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ pieces of literature.
   1. They were written for a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – something was going on that made the letter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
      1. Ex.: 1 Corinthians 1:10-11 – Paul had heard from Chloe’s house that there were divisions in the church
   2. Some do not explicitly state the reason they are written, but when reading the letter as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you can determine what that reason is.
7. **2** Each epistle was written to a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ audience.
   1. They spoke a different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, had different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and lived in a very different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   2. We must put on their ears and hear the message in the letter from their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**A STUDY METHOD FOR EPISTLES**

1. A good study method will fulfill the following 3 goals:
2. **1** A good interpretation sticks to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. You shouldn’t have to go \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the text to understand the point.
   2. This doesn’t mean you can’t use outside resources, just that these resources should help you understand only what the text is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ saying.
3. **2** A good interpretation is consistent with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the passage and book.
   1. Some think the entire Bible is like Proverbs with each verse having its own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and there being no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
      1. But even Proverbs has structure!
   2. The epistles contain a logical \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   3. We need to study in a way that looks for these \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and flows.
   4. Look for logical \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (because, therefore, if, and, etc.)
4. **3** A good interpretation will make good sense of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the passage.
   1. Ex.: Word Jumble – I T E E S L P
      1. You can make words with just a few letters, but the solution is incorrect unless you use all of the letters.
   2. A strong interpretation of Scripture will not discard portions of a text that are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but will bring them together in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ manner.

**HISTORICAL / LITERARY CONTEXT**

1. We will now give two steps to give a foundation for good interpretation of the epistles.
2. Like most new things, practice and repetition will be required.
3. If you are diligent though, you will find that these things become second nature and will inform all of your reading of Scripture.
4. **1** Understand the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Context (Background)
   1. Our first step is to understand the context to which the writer is writing. Who are the recipients? What do we know about them? What is going on? Why is the author writing?
   2. Use a Bible Dictionary, Commentary, or other resource to learn the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of a book.
   3. Read through the letter in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ using an accurate version of the Bible you can reasonably understand.
   4. As you read through the epistles jot down answers to the following questions:
      1. What do you notice about the people (or person) the letter is written to? (What nationality are they? Are they rich or poor? What are their problems and their attitudes?)
      2. What is the writer’s attitude?
      3. Are there any specific things mentioned about why the letter is being written (the occasion)?
      4. Write down the letter’s natural, logical divisions within the body.
5. **2** Understand the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Context (What’s Being Said)
   1. The second step is to follow the writer’s train of thought as he addresses the audience. What is he saying and how does it all fit together?
   2. Study each paragraph or logical section and briefly summarize the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of each one.
   3. How does each paragraph or logical section fit into a flow of ideas? Write a brief sentence explaining how each one fits into the overall flow of the argument.
      1. Remember logical connectors!
6. A final word on “problem passages”:
7. Sometimes they are difficult because they were not written to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We only know so much about the audience and their circumstances.
   1. It is hard to understand the answer if we don’t know the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Learn to distinguish between what you can be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about in the passage versus what is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Even if you can’t have full certainty, you can often still understand the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the passage.
10. Find and use a “good” commentary as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ step.
11. Good commentaries don’t just provide an interpretation; they provide \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ interpretations so that you consider all \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**THE NEED FOR HERMENEUTICS**

1. Sometimes discerning the application of a passage is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and relatively easy. Other times it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
2. Ex.: Read the following two passages – Titus 2:7-8, & 3:13
   1. Do both of these texts apply to you? If so, how and why?
3. This example is not too difficult, but consider other passages like 1 Corinthians 11:5 – Is it a sin for a woman to pray or prophesy without wearing a head covering?
4. We will go through 13 principles that will help with application of passages.

**TWO FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

1. **1** A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. When considering epistles, it is improper to suggest that the text means something different to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ than it meant in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. **2** Whenever we share the same (or similar) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the original audience, God’s word to us is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as His word to them.
   1. Consider 2 John 1:5-6 in which John addresses Christian love. Is there anything that limits this statement to John’s culture or does it apply to everyone at every time? Why or why not?

**EXTENDING PASSAGES BEYOND THEIR INTENT**

1. **3** When there are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ situations and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ particulars, God’s Word to us must be limited to its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intent.
   1. Ex.: 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.
      1. We often interpret this to forbid marriage between a Christian and non-Christian.
      2. However, the metaphor of a ‘yoke’ is rarely used in antiquity to refer to marriage, and there is nothing whatsoever in the context that remotely allows marriage to be in view here.

**APPLICATION: FROM THEN TO NOW**

1. Sometimes when we study epistles, we come across texts that address unique issues that existed at that time.
2. Those passages can fit into two categories:
   1. Those that address a first century issue that would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ happen today
   2. Those that address a first century issue that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ happen today, but probably wouldn’t
3. **4** When we run into a passage that addresses an issue that wouldn’t happen today or probably wouldn’t happen today, use the following steps:
   1. Understand all the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about the 1st Century issue.
   2. Understand the underlying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   3. Use your understanding of the specifics and the underlying principle to apply the principle to a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ today.

**CHALLENGE OF CULTURAL RELATIVITY**

1. When a passage addresses issues that are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or prescribes an action based on first-century \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we have to be able to peel back the layers and get to the heart of the matter.
   1. Sometimes it is even challenging to know when culture is involved and when the command \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ culture.
2. Here are seven more rules that can help us sort through passages that may or may not have elements that are cultural and then apply them.
3. **5** Distinguish between the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the message and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ teachings based on the core.
   1. Sometimes, the secondary teachings are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as well and sometimes they are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ expressions.
4. **6** Distinguish between what is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ right or wrong and things that are only right or wrong within a given \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. **7** Make a special note of items where the New Testament is uniform and consistent and where it reflects \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. Luke 18:22 “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”
   2. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”
6. **8** Differentiate between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the principles.
   1. Sometimes a writer may use a universal principle to support a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ application.
7. **9** Consider how many acceptable cultural \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were available at the time the text was written:
   1. If there was only one option and the Bible stuck with it, the option may be just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   2. If there were several options available and the Bible picked one specifically, it is more likely to be a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ principle.
   3. If the Bible resisted the existing cultural options and created a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ way of doing things it is likely a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ principle.
8. **10** Keep in mind cultural differences that affect how we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ certain passages.
   1. Read Romans 13:1-7 and consider the type of government over the Romans. Would they apply this passage in different ways than we would today?
9. **11** Let \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rule. From time to time you will find good men and women on different sides of an issue.
   1. While we should agree on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ teachings of Scripture, we must expect that we will have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to approach these disagreements with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**CHALLENGE OF SCRIPTURE BY OCCASION**

1. The epistles were written on specific \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for specific \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They were often answering questions asked by the churches or addressing problems within the church.
2. **12** Because Epistles were written as the result of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the churches, we don’t always know everything we would like to know.
   1. In Scripture, God gives us all we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not necessarily all we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
   2. Ex.: 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. What does this passage tell us Paul’s thorn in the flesh? What doesn’t this passage tell us about Paul’s thorn in the flesh?
3. **13** Sometimes we have unanswered questions because we are asking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ questions rather than asking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ questions.
   1. Ex.: 1 Cor. 7:1 “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.’”
   2. There was a specific list of questions this church had sent the Apostle Paul that we don’t have today.
   3. Because of this, we have to play a bit of Jeopardy with the Bible and try to deduce the questions based on the detailed answers the Lord has given us.
   4. Despite our best efforts, we will likely only end up with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ questions and not a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ list