

Letters from Home

*Messages for today
from the letters of the New Testament*

The letters we have in the New testament were written by the inspiration of God to the churches, the new Christians, in the broadening world of Christianity. They have a message for the readers of that time period. But since they were written by God, who knew that more people throughout the ages would become Christians, and since the message holds principles for all time, then the letters were also written to us today. They are letters from Home, letters from Heaven, letters from God to us as we try to follow Him on our way Home. And just as you might expect from a letter from home if you were far away from home, these letters are meant to encourage, strengthen and guide while we are in exciting, new, adventurous and yet sometimes difficult times and situations. These studies will look at the practical messages we can find in these "Letters from Home."

The letter to the Ephesians (1)

¿ What is your biggest complaint about society today?

God's new society

God, through Paul, writes to us about a new society, a new way of living together in a way of life that is a blessing to all. Let's look at what God's view of a good social order is.

¿ How often do you say "Thank you"? What are you thankful for?

READ 1:15-23

verses 15-19

What does Paul pray for these people? What does he want them to have?

Could this be part of your prayer for others? How might it help this group?

To what end are these things applied? What purpose will they have?

- wisdom and revelation?
- eyes of your heart enlightened?

How is the hope of these people different from others? What hope is it?

To what inheritance have they been called and what are its riches?

verses 19-23

¿ Who is the most powerful person you have ever seen? What is the most powerful thing you have ever seen?

What power is being exerted in "those who believe"?

How can this power be exerted in your life living for God?

What does the image of Christ's body imply for those who follow Him?

CONCLUSION - READ 3:14-21 THIS is God's family

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The letter to the Ephesians (2)

¿ What was one of the best gifts you received as a child? What made it so special?

God's new society

God, through Paul, writes to us about a new society, a new way of living together in a way of life that is a blessing to all. God offers to make us ALIVE in his society.

READ 2:1-10

Have yo ever imagined yourself in a life-threatening situation? (airplane crash, sickness, etc)
How good would it feel to be out of that situation?

verses 1-3

What does it mean to be "dead in sin"? What caused this?

Are cravings and desires bad or good? Should we gratify them or not?

Can you see that you were an "object of wrath" (even if you are not such anymore)?

verses 4-7

Why must God take the initiative to give life?

What is the relationship between *wrath* and *love* ?

How does our experience compare with Christ's? (verses 4-6)

verses 8-10

Give an example, an illustration of the key words: *grace*, *faith* and *works*.

What is the relationship between *grace* and *works*?

Why were we created (according to verse 10)?

Spiritually, do you feel more dead or alive now? Why?
What has God prepared for you to be and do?

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The letter to the Ephesians (3)

¿ Where do you come from? What does your citizenship mean to you?

God's new society

God, through Paul, writes to us about a new society, a new way of living together in a way of life that is a blessing to all. God offers a society that is made in equality.

READ 2:11-22

**Have you ever experienced racism or felt shut out? What were the reasons behind this?
Do the reasons make a difference in how you feel?**

verses 11-13

What was the situation between the Jews and Gentiles in the past? Why?

Clarify also that ALL nations could come to God through Judaism. The Jews themselves had created their own exclusivity.

What problems did the Gentiles face before Christ? (see verse 12)

What results from being "in Christ"?

verses 14-18

What is the bomb that Jesus dropped on the religious "class system" of his day?

What do these verses say about division based on race?

What do these verses say about division based on religion?

verses 19-22

What is a cornerstone? How is Christ the cornerstone?

How is the reconciling work of Christ like new citizenship? new family? a new temple?

*Although God's grace is personal, what social barriers should it be affecting in your community?
in your church? What is your role in that process?*

CONCLUSION - READ 3:14-21 God's family (focus on WHOLE family, ALL the saints)

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The letter to the Ephesians (4)

¿ What were some of your favorite dress-up costumes as a kid? Why those?

God's new society

God, through Paul, writes to us about a new society, a new way of living together in a way of life that is a blessing to all. In thi section, God gives us practical tools to put His society into practice.

READ 6:10-13

Why is verse 10 so important? How is this a reminder of what has already been said?

verse 12

Give some information about Paul's situation (captivity because of preaching - trouble from religious leaders and from governments, struggles with his own doubts).

How can "evil" influence our lives? How can these forces infect social, political, and religious structures?

When do you start studying for a test? When would be the best time to prepare for a sport competition?

Why is putting spiritual armor on at the time of the battle sometimes too late?

READ 6:14-20

Look at the six pieces of armor. Which are defensive, which offensive?

belt of truth - belt holds breastplate and gives strength, which truth?

breastplate of righteousness - whose righteousness? (see 2 Cor. 5:21)

feet, gospel of peace - flexibility, **going** power comes from peace (w/others and God)

shield of faith - what do we believe? Why does this shield us?

helmet of salvation - head is most important, think/see/know

sword of the Spirit - this is an offensive tool (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5)

How does prayer fit in to this battle?

Consider in what condition your armor is. What do you need to get ready for battle?

Where can the front line of this spiritual battle be? your church? community? country?

CONCLUSION - READ 6:23-24 Which of peace, love, faith, grace mean the most to you?

READ 3:14-21 - GOD's power at work in US!