

The Bible: The Epistles

The primary category of books in the New Testament is the Epistles. These 21 books are letters of instruction, correction, and promise. Of the 21 books, God used 5 different men to record His instruction for the church age. Their time of writing spans between 52AD and 90AD. The epistles are divided into two categories based on who God used to write them.

The first category, the Pauline Epistles, contains the letters Paul wrote to various churches and individuals. There are thirteen epistles identified as having been written by Paul. As Paul wrote he corrected and instructed his reader while focusing them on the love, grace, provision, and mercy of God. He wrote letters of instruction on living the new spiritual life that belongs to believers. Some of this instruction came in the form of correction and rebuke (such as to the church in Corinth and churches in Galatia). Other instruction was more direct such as Paul's instruction to Timothy. He is responsible for recording God's Word to believers in the following books:

Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians
Colossians	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus
Philemon		

The other epistles are referred to as the General Epistles. Mostly this is due to them having been written by someone other than Paul. Their writers include James, John, Peter, and Jude. These epistles are instructive in nature. The main focus in most of the General Epistles is on the transformation God can accomplish in believers after salvation. Scattered throughout their instruction is information concerning the future and eternity. But each of these General Epistles, much like those epistles written by Paul, focuses on how to live out the salvation that God has produced in those who have believed in His Son as their savior. Since the writer responsible for the book of Hebrews is debated it is included in this list of General Epistles.

Hebrews	James	1 st Peter
2 nd Peter	1 st John	2 nd John
3 rd John	Jude	

In each of God's epistles to church age believers He records through those whom He used to write them the nature of His love and grace toward His children. Those who have believed in His Son as their savior should focus on studying each of the New Testament Epistles, whether Pauline or General.

As these epistles are studied the believer becomes equipped with all he needs in order to walk out the spiritual life of a Christian during the church age. As the instruction in these epistles becomes the thought process of the believer he grows in spiritual maturity. As he heeds the correction contained within their verses, the child of God is able to be corrected in his thought and conduct.

All that God has revealed and has given to the believer in His Word and in these epistles is designed to benefit the believer and glorify God to men and to angels. The instruction must be read, studied, and trusted in order for it to have its full effect in the believer. To that end the epistles have been given.