

STUDYING NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

If you don't own a Bible dictionary, get one (*do not use Vines Expository Dictionary – it is not a good resource*)

- Good Bible Dictionaries
 - [*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*](#) (\$5.99 Kindle)
 - [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*](#) (\$35.00ish)
 - [*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*](#) (\$50.00 Kindle)
- Access ChatGPT for free at <https://chatgpt.com/> or download the ChatGPT mobile app - a good resource for general Bible questions based on a large research library.

Steps to Studying a New Testament Letter (Epistle)

Getting the Historical Context (What's the situation being addressed?)

- 1. Start with the biblical text alone. Read the epistle (New Testament letter) all the way through in one sitting.** Do this at least twice before moving on to the next step.
 - Read to get a “big picture” view and a “feel” for the whole argument.
- 2. List everything in the epistle that tells you something about the recipient(s) of the letter and problem/situation being addressed.**
- 3. Utilize biblical study tools.** Read the overview of the epistle in your encyclopedia and jot down a few notes pertaining to anything important for understanding the letter you may have missed. Ask ChatGPT what the historical context of the epistle is (note: answers are not always accurate but usually are).
 - Note: resources from biblical scholars or AI are not always accurate, and Bible scholars and teachers do not always agree with one another.
- 4. (Optional) Are there any keywords present that encapsulate what the author is talking about? If helpful, make a list of key words or repeated phrases that highlight the author's main point.**

Getting the Literary Context (What's the point of this book?)

- 5. Put it in your own words.** In a maximum of two sentences, state in a compact way the content of each paragraph. *What* does the writer say?
- 6. Ask and answer, “Why is this being said?”** In a maximum of one sentence, explain *why* you think the writer says this right at this point? How does this content contribute to the argument?
- 7. What are the timeless truths?** In a brief summary, what timeless truth(s) or principles do you learn from studying the book?