

WHAT BOOKS ARE IN THE EPISTLES?

The word epistle means “letter,” and in New Testament studies it refers to letters written by the apostles to churches or individuals. Here are the epistles included in the New Testament:

Romans is written by Paul to the church in Rome, systematically explaining the Gospel and its implications.

1 Corinthians is Paul writing to the church in Corinth to repent from their many sins and advising how to navigate the particularly pagan culture they lived in.

2 Corinthians follows with Paul commending the Corinthian church for their repentance, but also responding to claims that he doesn’t care about them.

Galatians is Paul writing to the church in Galatia, rebuking them for drifting into false teaching and reminding them grace removes the need for legalism.

Ephesians is Paul writing to the church in Ephesus about the need for Christian unity and how to achieve it.

Philippians is Paul writing to the church in Philippi about finding joy in Christ and the freedom that comes from that new life.

Colossians is Paul telling the church in Colossae to avoid pagan ideas about Jesus that downplay his divinity, along with instructions about living well.

1 Thessalonians is Paul commending the church in Thessalonica for their great faith and telling them how to continue on that path.

2 Thessalonians follows up the previous letter with Paul encouraging the Thessalonian church to stand amidst persecution.

1 Timothy is Paul writing to his disciple Timothy about how to avoid false teachings and operate a church well.

2 Timothy is apparently written by Paul in his last years, now in prison and suffering, describing what he’s gained and warning Timothy about the last days.

Titus is Paul writing to a disciple pastoring a church on Crete, advising him on how to pastor well.

Philemon is Paul writing to a Christian named Philemon, letting him know he's met Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus and asking Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother when he returns.

Hebrews reminds Christians who had initially practiced Judaism why Christianity is a better covenant.

James gives Jewish Christians "scattered abroad" practical principles on how to live for Christ.

1 Peter tells Christians (living mostly in modern-day Turkey) to place their trust and hope in Christ, even amidst persecution.

2 Peter tells Christians to watch out for scoffers and false prophets and affirms that Jesus will return soon.

1 John tells Christians that Jesus was human as well as divine, appealing to the fact the apostles saw and touched Jesus.

2 John encourages "the chosen lady and her children" to practice Christian love and watch out for deceptive people.

3 John encourages a Christian named Gaius who was going through a church dispute.

Jude warns believers to watch out for false prophets.