

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 8:*

### Following the Logic: Teaching Epistles

Why do we write letters?

- Letters are occasional. We send thank-you cards, birthday cards, Christmas cards. Usually, there is a specific purpose or occasion that spawned the letter.
- This is often the case with the *epistles*, which is just a fancy Bible word for “letter”. Epistles often address specific topics, issues, or questions. Just because something is left out of a letter doesn’t make it unimportant. Letters are for special occasions.

Who writes letters?

- This seems obvious, but letters are written **FROM** an individual or group and addressed **TO** an individual or group. In the New Testament, all of the books from Romans—Jude are epistles, written from Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude. But whom are they written to?
  - Example: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”
  - These letters are addressed to believers and Christians
  - It’s clear that Paul and others intended for their letters to be shared among the churches: “And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea” (Colossians 4:16).
- We will misinterpret the contents of a letter if we do not take into account the **TO** and **FROM**.
  - Example: I write a love letter addressed to my wife. In it I declare my undying love for her. You pick up the letter, ignore who it’s written to, then assume my undying love is directed at you.

Literary Devices in the Epistles:

*Logic and Argumentation*

- Since epistles are often addressing specific issues, the writers will often reason for the truth using logical arguments.
- *If/then* statements appear all throughout the epistles. The writer will argue that since the first statement is true, then the second statement must follow.
  - For instance, Paul goes to great lengths to prove that we are no longer slaves under the law but sons under Christ, in order to reach this conclusion in Galatians 4:7—“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”
- When an author is engaged in an argument, ask, *What is the author trying to prove?*
  - Connecting words like “since”, “so that”, “because”, “therefore”, and “in order that” indicate how one sentence follows, contradictions, or connects from the previous one.
  - Consider Romans 5:1—“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If you had to guess, what do you think Paul was seeking to prove in chapters 1-4?

### *Appeal to Authority*

- Now, appeals to authority can be a logical fallacy when people try to prove that an argument is true just because someone powerful or famous said it.
- However, an appeal to authority can be used properly when everyone agrees it is a proper authority. This is why it's important for us to realize that the epistles are written to churches who all acknowledge the authority of Scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Often, a writer like Paul will appeal to his own authority as an apostle in order to establish his point.
  - Consider Galatians 1:1,11-12. How is Paul appealing to authority before the Galatian church?

### *Scripture Quotation*

- Technically, this could be considered an appeal to authority, but the epistle writers use Scripture quotation for many reasons.
- They might seek to illustrate a point.
  - Consider Romans 3:9-20. What point is Paul making?
- They might seek to remind their readers of something they already know.
  - Read 2 John 1:5. Now read John 13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."
- They might quote a passage of Scripture in order to explain its implications.
  - Look at Romans 4:3-12. Consider the quotation of Genesis 15:6 in verse 3—"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"
- They might quote Scripture in order to show its fulfillment in Christ.
  - The book of Hebrews does this over and over again.
  - Consider Hebrews 5:5-10. How is the writer showing us the fulfillment in Christ?

### *Imperatives*

- These are commands that show us how to live in light of the Gospel.
- Example: Romans 12:9-13

### *Lab:*

Hebrews 8:1-13 "The Old and New Covenant"

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 "Stand Firm"

Romans 12:14-21 "Bless Those Who Persecute You"

1 Corinthians 1:18-30 "The Folly of the Cross"

Galatians 2:15-21 "Justified by Faith"

Ephesians 5:1-16 "Walking As Children of the Light"

Philippians 2:1-11 "Humility like Christ"

Colossians 3:1-17 "Putting Off the Old Self, Putting On the New"