

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 Colossians

¿ What was the spiritual climate of your home as you grew up?

- We're right, they're wrong
- Do your own thing
- It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere
- Who cares?
- The Bible says it and that settles it
- Love God and do as you please

Give an example.

¿ How did you feel when you realized that your family's view of God was not the only one?

Defensive? Intrigued? Relieved? Depressed?

***A little information** - Colossae was previously an important commercial center, but in decay by the time of the writing of this letter. The church was struggling with "syncretism" whereby various ideas are mixed in with the Christian faith. Pay attention as you read this letter to the evidences of these problems and how God, through Paul, deals with it. Paul only knew the church in Colossae through Epaphras, who had probably founded the church there during Paul's teaching at Ephesus.*

READ 1:3-14

verse 3-8 - What qualities of this church attracted Paul? Which would attract you the most?

Some qualities of the church in Colossae:

faith in Christ Jesus

love for all the saints

they understood the message of God's grace in all its truth

they are bearing fruit and growing (see verse 10)

verse 9-14 - What does Paul pray for for this young church?

Some things Paul prays for:

fill you with knowledge of His will through spiritual wisdom and understanding

in order that you may live a life worthy, may please Him in every way

bear fruit in every good work

grow in the knowledge of God

strengthened with all power to have great endurance and patience

joyfully giving thanks to the Father

How is the fruit growing in your life? How can you help this "crop" develop?

What in this church encourages you to be the same?

READ 1:13-14 as conclusion

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 Colossians (2)

¿ **Which "superhero" was your favorite when you were growing up? Why?**

READ 1:13-14 as opener

READ 1:15-18

What are some of the characteristics of Jesus that we see in this passage?

- *image of the invisible God*
 - *firstborn over all creation (creator)*
 - *all things created by and for him*
 - *before all things*
 - *in him all things hold together - head of the body, the church*
 - *beginning & firstborn among the dead*
- He has supremacy!*

How does this make you feel about Jesus?

Why, considering the syncretism mentioned in the last lesson, would this be important?

READ 1:19-20 - How would you define "reconciliation" in ordinary terms?

How did Jesus achieve this?

READ 1:21-23 - What "before and after" story do you see in these verses?

Have you ever felt "alienated"?

How does Jesus want to present us to God?

What is a central part of the gospel? *hope* Is this something you feel in the "good news"?

¿ **From this passage, what would you say to someone who asked you, "How can I get to know God?" ?**

¿ **At times, what people (or forces) seem to be more powerful than Jesus? Why?**

How can this knowledge help you in any way practically in your life?

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 Colossians (3)

¿ What kind of person is "religious"? How do you feel about people like that? Were your parents permissive or strict (what was the BIG rule in your house)?

Remember, Jesus is supreme and is mighty, able to make us holy
READ 1:25-27 as opener "Christ in you, the hope of glory"

READ 2:6-23

Does any of this surprise you?

**Why is 2:6-7 a perfect summary of our life with Christ?
What can damage this relationship?**

2:9-12 - A short explanation of circumcision (see also Joshua 5:2-9)

What kind of circumcision is done by Christ?

**How does forgiveness in Christ (2:13-15) disarm the "powers and authorities"?
What does this mean to you?**

2:16-23

Why do rules like "Do not touch" not work?

What is your experience with rules?

What additions to the faith have you encountered from people who have tried to encourage you to be "more spiritual"?

¿ Looking back at verses 6 and 7, when have you felt like your roots were not very deep? What have you done to help your roots with God sink deeper?

¿ What convinced you that living up to religious rules could not change you on the inside?

How can this knowledge help you in any way practically in your life?

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 Colossians (4)

¿ **Which clothes do you choose when you need to feel like a "new person"?**

In buying clothes, what is your focus:

- **name-brand**
- **bargain hunting**
- **style conscious**
- **quality conscious**
- **conscious of what others think (partners, friends, family)**

READ 3:1-4

What does this say about who we are if we are in Christ? What should be different?

How is setting your mind and heart on Christ related to what he has already done for us?

How does it relate to what he will do?

READ 3:5-17

¿ **Which piece of clothing do you not want to get rid of, even though it needs to go? Have you ever radically cleaned out your closet?**

What contrasts do you see between the "clothes" of the "earthly nature" and those of "God's chosen people"?

What does all this "putting on" and "putting off" actually involve:

- **a quick-change act**
- **a disguise**
- **a burial service**
- **a shopping spree**

READ 3:18 - 4:1

What do these verses have to do with you, practically?

¿ **Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable old t-shirt? With what part of Christ's wardrobe would you like to replace it?**

What does the word of Christ and the name of Jesus have to do with this type of life?

CONCLUSION - READ 4:2, 5-6

¿ **How do these last verses relate to the first verses in chapter 3?**