

The Bible: The Letters

Chapter 21 Summary

Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will reflect on the struggles they face in living as followers of Christ and where they can turn for guidance.
- The participants will explore the letters in the New Testament, the message the letters had for early Christian communities, and how that message applies to Christians today.

Content Summary

1. The New Testament contains twenty-one letters, also called **epistles** (a Greek word meaning “letter”).
2. Thirteen of the letters were written by Paul or his followers. Seven more letters were written by James, Peter, John, and Jude (or by their followers). The Letter to the Hebrews is by an unknown author, and it reads more like a sermon than a letter.
3. Most letters follow this format: (a) greetings, (b) the body of the letter, and (c) personal messages and a blessing.
4. We read these letters today because the values they express help us to live our Christian lives.
5. In the letters of Saint Paul, we find these important themes: (a) Jesus’ death on the cross, (b) the resurrection of the body, and (c) Jesus came to save all people.
6. The First Letter of Peter addressed the suffering the first Christians experienced for living their faith.
7. The Letter of James addresses the concern of living our faith with integrity and also warns against judging others, boasting, and ignoring those who are poor and hungry.
8. The First Letter of John encourages us to live in the light of God’s revealed truth and to not give up our faith in Jesus. The whole letter talks about the importance of love.
9. We read the letters of the New Testament today because we can learn from them how to live as Christians. These early Christians, who lived so close to the time of Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection, can guide our lives in Christ today.

(All summary points are taken from *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers, Second Edition*. Copyright © 2014 by Saint Mary’s Press. All rights reserved.)

