

New Testament letters : questions to get you thinking

Part A - the overview: *catching the big idea*

Read the letter aloud straight through without stopping.

Keep reading it again until you can answer these questions.

1. Who is writing the letter and who is it written to?
2. Who are these people and what do you know about them?
3. Where are these people living and why are they there?
4. What do you know about these places? What was life like?
5. Having found the writer and recipient, now find the other parts of the letter.
(greeting, prayer wish, main body, final greeting & farewell)
6. Consider the historical context. How does the letter fit with the book of Acts?
Which cultural, social or religious customs at that time relate to this letter?
7. What are the writer's main concerns? Why was the letter written?
8. Write down any words or phrases that keep cropping up.
9. Make a list of the main themes.
10. What do you think is the single major theme of the letter?
11. Make a note of anything you do not understand.

Part B - the detail: *getting to grips with each thought*

Read the chapter or passage many times in different translations.

1. What do you think are the important words and what do they mean?
2. Break the chapter or passage into sections of thought.
For each section
 - What issue is being dealt with? What part does 1st century culture play?
 - Is there anything else in the Bible which helps you understand the issue?
 - Write down in your own words any principles the writer applied to the issue.
 - How was the 1st century reader expected to respond?
 - Are we expected to respond in the same way today? Why?
 - Write a brief summary of the section in your own words.
3. Are you facing a similar issue or situation in your life at the moment?
4. How do any of the principles in the letter apply to your situation today?
5. What could you do now?