



We Are Epistles
Author: Annette R. Evans

P_{review}

Here's a word we don't use much: "epistle." *Read II Corinthians 3:2 from your Bible.*

- What is an epistle? (*a letter; written communication*)

Let's write a quick letter to someone who wasn't able to make it to Bible study this week (or someone you'd like to invite to join). We'll pass the letter around and each add a sentence. *Provide paper and pen and encourage everyone to participate.*

P_{raise}

While that letter is going around, let's start another one: a "praise epistle." Let's each write a sentence of praise to God. *Provide another piece of paper and pen and encourage everyone to participate.*

After everyone has had a chance to write on each letter, have someone read the letters aloud.

P_{arable}

Do you enjoy receiving letters? (*I do!*)

Writing letters is becoming a lost art. Most of us just send a quick text or email or post something on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram when we want to communicate.

When is the last time you received an actual written letter in the mail, who was it from, and what was it about? (*encourage sharing; maybe bring a letter to share*)

P_{resent}

When we think of letters, we think of paper and pen or computer text printed on a page. However, according to the apostle Paul, YOU are a letter, and you were not written with ink. *Read II Corinthians 3:3 from your Bible.*



- You are a letter from whom? (*Christ*)
- You are written not with ink but with what? (*the Spirit of the living God*)
- Instead of writing on paper or tablets of stone, where has Christ written His letter? (*on human hearts*)
- What famous Old Testament items were written on tablets of stone? (*the 10 Commandments*)
- What happened to the first set of 10 Commandments written on stone tablets? (*Moses threw them down and broke them when he saw the Israelites worshiping a golden calf*)

One problem with letters written on stone tablets or paper is that they can be ruined or lost or stolen, and then you can't read them anymore. Jesus writes His letter right on our hearts where no one else can ruin or steal it.

When Moses saw the Israelites worshiping the golden calf, he became very upset because he knew they were breaking the second commandment (**Exodus 20:4**), which was written on the tablet he was holding in his hand. We have trouble obeying God's Word when it's just written on a stone tablet or a piece of paper. That's why God said it's time for something new. *Read Jeremiah 31:31-33 from your Bible.*

- What is a covenant? (*an agreement, promise*)
- God's new covenant is that His law will be written where? (*in hearts*)

Practice

Listen to **II Corinthians 3:3** again. *Read this verse from your Bible.*

- What writes Christ's letter in our hearts? (*the Spirit of the living God*)

When you receive the Holy Spirit, Christ's epistle is written in your heart—and we're not talking about your blood-pumping organ. We're talking about the center of your personality—who YOU are, your feelings and emotions.

- If Christ puts His letter right at the center of YOU, do you think it will be easier to obey His words? (*yes; when His Word is in your heart, you will begin to love it!*)

Once Jesus writes His letter in your heart, you become His epistle to everyone around you. How you act shows people what is written there. Since His Spirit is what writes His Word in your heart, the fruit of the Spirit is what will show.

- What is the fruit of the Spirit? (love, joy, peace, long-suffering [patience], gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance [self-control])



P_{ray}

Let's pray right now and ask Jesus to write His epistle in our hearts. Let's ask Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit and help us grow the fruit of the Spirit so that when people "read" us, they see Him.

P_{lus}

Take the time to write a letter to someone this week. As you do, remember that you yourself are a letter, an epistle that people are reading every day.