



What is your favorite book in the New Testament?

This will finish the “favorite book” series of questions - at least for now. Picking favorite books of the Bible is kind of like picking favorite foods or colors or songs. The answers change as your life situation changes. So the book I might turn to more often next year could be different from the one I find myself using most at this point in time.

After the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) twenty one of the remaining twenty three books of the New Testament are actually letters that were written to churches or individuals. Thirteen of those were written by the apostle Paul. Here are my six finalists and why...

Acts - This is the only “history” book in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles recounts the history of the growth of the Christian church in the first decades after Jesus ascended to heaven. Included are the accounts of the Holy Spirit being poured out at Pentecost, the persecution of the early church that God used to spread the Gospel beyond the confines of Jerusalem; the conversion and subsequent mission trips of the Apostle Paul. As a history book, the focus is on actual events that happened in the lives of real people - the early followers of Christ.

Romans - The Apostle Paul’s longest letter (to the church at Rome) contains some of my favorite chapters in the entire Bible. In Romans 1 we are reminded that there is evidence for the existence of God - all around us. We also find a very ‘point-blank’ answer to the question of what God thinks of homosexuality. In Romans 5 we find a great reminder of the depth of God’s unconditional love: He sent His Son to DIE for us while we were “powerless,” “ungodly,” “sinners” who were “enemies” of God. That’s love! And in what may be at the top of my list of “favorite chapters of the Bible” (Romans 8), Paul reminds us that “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” “the Spirit helps us in our weakness and ..intercedes for us,” “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him,” “If God is for us who can be against us?” and “nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ephesians - Is a book of very practical encouragement on how to deal with the challenging relationships in the church and in our individual lives. It includes the great reminder that God has saved us by His grace and not by anything we can do. Ephesians 3 reminds us of this great truth: God is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine.” In Ephesians 4-5 we find some great instruction on resolving conflict: Speak the truth in love... put off selfishness... put off falsehood (including exaggerations like ‘you always’ and ‘you never’)... don’t let the sun go down on your anger... don’t let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what will build others up... be kind and compassionate... forgive as Jesus

forgave you... imitate God by living a life of sacrificial love. And in chapter six Paul reminds us of the armor and weapons God has given us to fight and defeat Satan.

James - is a shorter book similar to the book of Proverbs found in the Old Testament. It's filled with practical wisdom for everyday life including nuggets like: When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.

Revelation - This final book in the Bible brings HIStory to a close with two things people love: A story about a victory for your team. And accounts that tell us what will happen in the future. (Hint: Really bad stuff for those who reject Jesus and REALLY amazing stuff for those who hang in there with faith in Him.)

That leaves this finalist that gets the nod today (again, ask me tomorrow and the answer may be different): Philippians. As I mentioned with my Old Testament favorite, I like short books - ones that I can read from beginning to end in 15 minutes or less. (I just read the four chapters in Philippians in half that time!) I love the book, because it emits joy and peace from beginning to end - and who doesn't need joy and peace in the midst of a world that encourages us to throw ourselves a pity party filled with plenty of anxiety. Philippians is a great "attitude adjuster" reminding us that even though we can't always (often?) control our circumstances, we have control of our attitude 100% of the time.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net