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NT 645 General Epistles

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Department of English Bible

NT (EB) 645 General Epistles. Three hours. Traina.

Course Materials:

The course covers the following general or catholic epistles: I John, James, and I and II Peter. The emphasis is on key areas of these epistles.

Course Objectives:

1. In the area of ^{COGNITIVE DOMAIN} METHOD-- The primary emphasis in methodology is on the study of books as wholes. As a result, the student should develop in his ability to do the following.
 - a. Survey books as wholes, including:
 - 1) Identifying the general materials of a book (biographical, historical, ideological, etc.), and the specific materials by giving a brief title to each chapter which recalls its contents by association (MBS, pp. 55-60, 77, W);
 - 2) Locating the main units and sub-units of a book, and observing the major laws of relationship operative between these units (MBS, pp. 49-55);
 - 3) Asking a few questions concerning each major law observed, * [designed to discover the interpretive significance of the presence of each law] (MBS, pp. 95-111);
 - 4) Identifying strategic areas or key verses which provide insight into a book as a whole;
 - 5) Noting evidence bearing on such higher critical matters as the identity of the writer and recipients, and the occasion, date, and place of writing;
 - 6) Observing other major features of the book as a whole, including literary characteristics not previously noted.
 - b. Interpret individual parts of a book in light of their relations to other parts and to the book as a whole, and in the process begin to answer some of the questions raised during the survey.
 - c. Synthesize the findings made in the book ^{-PURPOSE-} [in order to] arrive at the major emphases in the whole, using such techniques as charts, thematic summaries, brief essay statements, topical summaries, and lists of truths, and in the process answer some of the questions raised during the survey.
2. In the area of ^{COGNITIVE DOMAIN} CONTENT--The student should be able to do the following in relation to the General Epistles studied without using an open Bible:
 - a. Indicate the distinctive literary arrangement (structure) of each book, including its major units identified by chapter and theme, the primary relations (laws) operative within the book as a whole, and the specific materials with which these relations are used

- b. Identify and discuss the main themes of each Epistle, on the basis of specific illustrations and substantiations located by chapter;
 - c. Locate by chapter and discuss contextually distinctive and significant passages found in each Epistle;
 - d. Demonstrate how a sound methodology is essential for the interpretation of each Epistle, including specific illustrations and substantiations;
 - e. Compare and contrast the General Epistles as regards their background and main teachings;
 - f. Discuss main motifs which run through the General Epistles.
3. Attitudes--the student should: *APPROPRIATE REACTION*
- a. Appreciate the value of a sound methodology for the study of books as wholes to the end that he/she will continue using and improving that methodology;
 - b. Desire to continue studying the General Epistles on the basis of an appreciation of their value;
 - c. Intend to utilize the General Epistles in a preaching and/or teaching ministry, and in other aspects of ministry.

Texts Required:

1. REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE BIBLE.
2. METHODICAL BIBLE STUDY, R. Traina.
3. PRINCETON BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR BIBLE STUDY.

Requirements:

1. The preparation of the following lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated. The lessons will be due at the beginning of the class hour on the day specified by the professor. Late lessons will not be accepted unless permission is granted based on an emergency.
2. Punctual attendance is expected. You will be asked to report absences, if any, at the close of the semester. Punctuality and absences will be considered in evaluating the work of the course.
3. A final examination based on the objectives of the course (without the use of open Bible).

LESSONS *MINI UNIT TWO LESSONS EXCEPT FOR
SURVEYS & SYNTHESIS OF*

General Directions *NO TWO LESSONS FROM A SINGLE BOOK*

1. Give primacy in sequence and time to the firsthand study of the text, then use secondary sources when time permits. Vary the secondary sources so as to become acquainted with various commentaries. Do not use class notes from previous years.
2. Make primary use of the R.S.V., but also use other translations and the original language, if possible, as auxiliary tools.
3. Always give chapter and verse references for your findings.
4. Paraphrase whenever possible. Using various translations will assist you in this connection.
5. Be as analytical as possible.
6. Try to do a well-rounded study on each lesson, even though you cannot be exhaustive. Attempt to explore one significant area of each lesson in depth if possible.
7. Organize your work in the best possible way in your initial approach.
8. Be as thorough and as profound as possible.
9. Strive for accuracy in your work.
10. Define key and ambiguous words.
11. Constantly compare and contrast the work done in private study with classwork to discover areas of strength and of need. Make a conscious effort to implement your findings in subsequent studies.
12. Note any questions or problems which arise.
13. In all your work make a conscious effort to develop a sound, concrete, orderly, and thorough study procedure which fits your individual abilities and needs.

Lesson I -- Survey of I John (II & III John) *DUE THUR. FOR 2nd & 3rd SESSIONS 6-7-11-12-13*

Read the entire lesson before proceeding. Keep in mind that the initial survey of a book-as-a-whole is observational, partial, and tentative. Consequently, premature interpretations should be avoided, and the findings made should be subject to completion and correction based on the subsequent study of the parts. The survey should be done without reference to subsequent lessons.

- A. Read the entire Epistle several times at one sitting if possible, noting the following. It may help to record some of your findings on a chart or diagram and others in columns.
1. Subject matter -- give a brief title to each chapter of the book (see MBS, p. 77).
 2. Structure -- locate the major structural units of the book, and the few main relations operative within and between these units. (See MBS, pp. 49-59).
 3. Interpretive Questions -- ask a few key interpretive questions about each of the major laws observed and the subject matter with which they are used. You should not attempt to answer these questions at this time. (See MBS, pp. 97-111).
 4. Strategic Areas -- pinpoint key passages which provide "windows" through which to view the book-as-a-whole.
 5. Writer, Readers, and Date and Place of Writing
 - a. note evidence indicating the identity, characteristics, and purpose of the writer, as well as his relationship to the readers;
 - b. discover evidence relating the identity, characteristics, and problems of the readers;
 - c. locate evidence suggesting the date and place of writing, if any.
 6. Other major impressions -- list a few of the major impressions you received in surveying the book-as-a-whole not previously covered, including such matters as outstanding literary features and dominant themes.
- B. Read II and III John, and compare and contrast these epistles with I John.
- C. If you have time, read an introduction to the Epistles of John in a good commentary or Bible encyclopedia. Compare the results of this research with your previous findings.

Lesson II -- I John 1:1-2:29 *DUE THUR 27 3 SESSIONS*

- A. Survey of Segments -- Survey as a whole the segments in 1:1-4, 1:5-2:6, 2:7-11, and 2:12-29, noting the following where relevant. Do not refer to the rest of the lesson.
1. Subject matter -- give a brief title to each paragraph (see MBS, p. 77).
 2. Structure -- the main grouping of paragraphs, and the few main relations operative within and between these groupings (see MBS, pp. 49-55).
 3. Interpretive questions -- ask a few key interpretive questions based on each main relationship and the subject matter it involves. *FOR TWO OF THE LATTERS*
 4. Strategic areas -- locate any strategic areas or key verses which provide insight into each segment-as-a-whole. *INTRODUCED SEGMENT 2 STRATEGIC AREAS*
 5. Literary forms -- identify the literary form(s) found in each segment (see MBS, pp. 68-71).
- B. Analysis
1. According to I John 1:1-4, what is the basis for the authority of the book? What is the significance of such a basis? What are its implications for a concept of authority?
 2. What is the meaning of the stated purpose of the book found in 1:1-4? How are its various parts interrelated? Why should the author write with this purpose?
 3. What is meant by the affirmation that "God is light"? (1:5) Trace the contrasts in 1:6-2:6. What does each mean and why are they valid? How are they related to 1:5 and to 1:1-4?
 4. What is the "new commandment" to which the author refers in 2:7-11? In what sense is it "new"? What is meant by "love"? Why is it true that "he who loves his brother abides in the light"? (2:10) How are the statements of 2:7-11 related to what precedes?

5. Who are the groups identified in 2:12-14, and what reason for writing is indicated in relation to each group? Why are these reasons stated? How are they related to what precedes? What is the radical difference between loving the world and loving the Father? (2:15-17) Who are the anti-Christians according to 2:18-29? Why is it true that "no one who denies the Son has the Father"? (2:23) Why this emphasis in view of the purpose of the book and other preceding materials?
6. How do 2:28-29 provide the transition to chapter 3?

C. Synthesis

List the main ideas stressed in 1:5-2:29. How are they related to each other? How does the author begin developing the thesis that loving God and believing in Jesus Christ, and loving one's brother are inseparable?

Lesson III - I John 3 2 SESSION LESSON THURSDAY MARCH 4th

A. Survey *THRU INTER. QUESTIONS #3, OMIT #4 & 5 (SEE LESSON II)*

Follow the suggestions of Lesson II, A

B. Analysis

1. Trace carefully the thought development of this segment. Pay special attention to the treatment and meaning of the following themes: being children of God; the appearance of Christ; sin, especially as hating one's brother; righteousness, especially as love for the brethren; and belief in Jesus Christ.
2. Focus on the interpretation of I John 3:9. Observe the verse, raise questions on the basis of your observations, and answer the key questions on the basis of the determinants discussed on pp. 139ff. of *METHODICAL BIBLE STUDY*. What is the significance of 3:9 for understanding chapter 3 and the book-as-a-whole? What is its importance in Wesleyan theology?

C. Synthesis

*CONTINUITY BTWN BELIEVING & DOING
THAT GROUPS - GOD'S/SATAN'S*

List the main truths of chapter 3. How are they related to each other? How do they illuminate the preceding materials? What problems does the chapter raise?

Lesson IV -- I John 4:1-5:12 2 SESSION LESSON ^{ONE} FRIDAY MARCH 7th

A. Survey

Follow the suggestions of Lesson II, A in relation to the following units: 4:1-6, 4:7-21, and 5:1-12. *PRIMARY LAYERS FOR EACH UNIT + QUESTIONS
STRATEGIC AREA*

B. Analysis

1. How does 3:24 form a transition to 4:1-6? What is meant by "spirit"? What various emphases are made in relation to "testing the spirits"? What is the significance of these emphases? How do they relate to the preceding material?
2. What are the nature, characteristics and reasons for loving one another according to 4:7-21? What is the meaning and theological significance of the affirmation that "God is love"? What is the importance of the incarnation and crucifixion for understanding and accepting this affirmation? How does this illuminate the emphasis throughout the book on believing that Jesus is the Son of God? What is involved in "abiding in God"?
3. Trace the thought development of 5:1-12. Which ideas here are stressed in the preceding material? What new ideas, if any, are found in these verses? What is meant by 5:6-8, and how do these verses relate to the context?

C. Synthesis

In what ways do 4:1-5:12 bring together the main emphases of I John?

Lesson V -- Review and Synthesis of I John (II and III John) *2 SESSION THUR. 13th*

- A. Summarize the main problems suggested by I John and the main themes used by the author to meet these problems.
- B. Make a list of propositions about "love" based on I John. In light of these propositions, try to define or describe "love." In what ways should such love be implemented in the Christian community?
- C. According to I John, why are love and belief in Christ inseparable? What are the implications of this inseparability?

Lesson VI -- Survey of James *THU. 18th 2 SESSION*

Use the applicable parts of Lesson I as a basis for surveying James as a whole.

Lesson VII -- James 1:2-27 *FRI 21st 2 SESSION LESSON*

- A. Survey *LIST TWO PRIMARY LAWS + QUESTIONS + 2 STRATEGIC AREAS connected to laws*

Use the relevant suggestions of Lesson II-A as a basis for surveying the segment as a whole.

P. Analysis

1. What is meant by "trials" in 1:2-4? How does the joyful facing of trials have the results indicated? Why do these results warrant the joyful facing of trials?
2. Define "wisdom" as used in 1:5-8. Why is wisdom discussed at this point? Discuss the theology of prayer set forth in these verses. What is its significance? Why is the prayer of faith without doubting indispensable for the gift of wisdom?
3. What problem seems to underlie the exhortation of 1:9-10a? (Compare with 2:1ff. and 4:13ff.) What is the author's solution for the problem? How does he support his exhortation? How is the statement of 1:9-11 related to the context?
4. What connection, if any, is there between experiencing "trials" and being "tempted"? (1:12-15) Why discuss temptation in this context? What is the significance of the statement that God cannot be tempted in light of the Incarnation? What is James' understanding of the process of temptation? How is Satan as tempter related to this process? How are the statements of 1:16-18 related to these emphases?
5. How are the exhortations in vs. 19-21 germane to the preceding discussion? In light of 1:22-25 and the surrounding context, how does the hearer but non-doer of the "word" deceive himself? In what sense is the "word" like a mirror? What is the significance of describing the "word" as the perfect law of liberty?
6. Analyze the concept of "religion" set forth in vs. 26-27. What are the links between these verses and the preceding context?

C. Synthesis

1. What are the chief fallacies dealt with in this segment, and what are the chief ways in which the author deals with them?
2. What are the major cohesive elements in the chapter, and what is their significance?

Lesson VIII -- James 2 *THU 27th IMPARTIALITY OVERHEAD*

A. Survey

B. Analysis

1. What problem is suggested by the statements in 2:1-4? What parallels, if any, does this problem have in our day? State in your own words and analyze the reasons for impartiality given in 2:2-13.
2. State in your own words the main principle enunciated in 2:14-26. What main lines of reasoning are used to substantiate this principle? In what sense are the following true: Faith without works is dead, Abraham and Rahab were justified by their works, and a man is justified by works and not by faith alone? What is the exact relationship between faith and works? On the basis of these verses comment on the following statement: "It is faith alone that justifies but the faith that justifies is never alone."

C. Synthesis

1. How are 2:14-26 related to 2:1-13 and to chapter 1? In what sense is it true that we believe what we do? *Paul - works what faith*
2. In light of Romans 2:6-11, 3:27-28, and 4:1-5, was Luther justified in describing James as "a straw-epistle" because of a supposed cleavage between Paul and him? Support your answer.
3. Discuss whether James 2 provides a sound foundation for a contemporary Christian ethic.

Lesson IX -- James 3:1-4:12 *THUR. 3rd*

A. Survey

B. Analysis

1. To what problem is the statement of 3:1 addressed? Identify the various images used by James in 3:2-12 and show how each supports his reasoning. What different characteristics of the tongue are indicated? Why James' great concern regarding the use of the tongue? What is the basic thrust of his reasoning?
2. Identify the contrasting elements in 3:13-18, define significant terms, and indicate the essential differences between the contrasting elements. Why the great stress on "peace"? In light of what is said, why are wisdom, meekness, and the good life indivisible? Relate the emphases of 3:13-18 to 3:1-12, 2:14-26, 1:22-27, and 1:5-8, and indicate the significance of your findings.
3. What actions and characteristics of the readers are noted in 4:1-6? What is the significance of "unfaithful creatures" (4:4) in light of 2:14-26? What common elements, if any, recur in 4:1-6? Paraphrase and interrelate the exhortations of 4:7-10. How do they follow logically from the statements of 4:1-6 (note the "therefore" of 4:7)? What do 4:1-10 have in common with 3:1-18 and with the preceding context in chapters 1 and 2?
4. Relate the exhortation of 4:11 to 3:1ff. and to 1:19-21. How does James support his exhortation by an appeal to law? Compare with 2:8-13.

C. Synthesis

1. List the major truths of 3:1-4:12.
2. Indicate how these verses are an integral part of the Epistle of James.

Lesson X -- James 4:13-5:20 *THU. 15th*

A. Survey

B. Analysis

1. Trace and interpret the exhortations and substantiations of 4:13-5:11. What are the major problems treated in these verses? How do the emphases here relate to the preceding context?
2. James 5:12-20 has been called a "manual of discipline." What various matters are discussed in these verses, how, and why? Explain the significance of 5:16 in its context. Why are confession and intercessory prayer related? What is the contemporary significance of these verses?

C. Synthesis

1. What are the ruling principles of 4:13-5:20?
2. Compare and contrast these verses with the rest of the book.

Lesson XI -- Synthesis of James *THUR. 17th*

A. Summarize the theological ethic of James. What are its dominant emphases? What are the primary virtues stressed. In what sense are these virtues truly Christian?

B. Study James to discover the major characteristics of good exhortation.

Lesson XII -- Survey of I Peter *THU. 22nd*

Use the applicable parts of Lesson I as a basis for surveying I Peter as a whole.

Lesson XIII -- I Peter 1:3-2:10 *FRI 25th*

A. Survey

B. Analysis and Synthesis

Do an original study of these materials. Indicate clearly the steps you followed and the findings you made in following each step. At the close of your study formulate a few questions which would be useful in guiding others in a study of this passage.

Lesson XIV - I Peter 2:11-5:11 *THUR 1st TRANSCRIPT*

1. Identify and (interpret) each exhortation in these verses. What is the significance of the various groups involved and of what is exhorted in relation to these groups?
2. Interpret the substantiations for each exhortation. As a result of this study, list the main appeals made in the substantiations. Why are these appeals made? Note the emphasis in 3:19-22 and 4:6.
3. How do the recurring themes here reflect the emphases of 1:3-2:10?
4. What solutions are proposed in 2:11-5:11 for the very problems faced by Peter in the Gospels?

Lesson XV - Synthesis of I Peter *FRI 2nd*

- X. Study I Peter in relation to how it handles the problem of motivation, especially in regard to the problem of suffering.
- [2] Focus your attention on one of the following areas in I Peter: ethics, Christology, soteriology, or exchatology.
- X. Compare and contrast I Peter with James.

Lesson XVI - Survey of II Peter *THUR. 8th*
Use the applicable parts of Lesson I.

*TRANSCRIPT
PRINCIPAL LAW SPECIFIC, INTERPRET AT 2*

Lesson XVII - II Peter 1:3-2:22 *TUE. 13th*
Apply the suggestions of Lesson XIII.

Lesson XVIII - II Peter 3:1-18 *FRI. 16th*
Apply the suggestions of Lesson XIII.)

Lesson XIX - Synthesis of II Peter

1. Contrast [those who follow] the "holy prophets" to the "false prophets" according to this book. What major emphases emerge from this contrast?
2. Compare and contrast the motivation of I and II Peter.

Lesson XX - Synthesis of General Epistles Studied

1. Review the major themes of each epistle. State the theme of each book in a sentence or two.
2. Compare and contrast the epistles as to their major emphases and approaches. Interrelate their emphases.
3. What do you learn from the epistles with regard to the "art of motivation"?
4. Identify key statements in each epistle, and be able to locate each by chapter and to interpret each without reference to the biblical text.
5. List the major lessons you have learned from the General Epistles and support your statements from the material of the Epistles.