Definition: epistle from The Macquarie Dictionary

1. a written communication; a letter, especially one of formal or didactic character.

Plural: epistles

2. noun usually upper case

/ˈpɪsəl/ /uhˈpisuhl/
one of the apostolic letters found in the New Testament.

Plural: epistles

3. noun often upper case

/ˈpɪsəl/ /uhˈpisuhl/
an extract, usually from one of the Epistles of the New Testament, forming part of the Eucharistic service in certain churches.

Plural: epistles

Etymology: Middle English; Old English epistol, from Latin epistola, from Greek epistles message, letter

Summary Article: epistle
From The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Letter, particularly an open literary letter or letter in the form of a poem. In the New Testament, the Epistles are 21 letters to individuals or to the members of various churches written by Christian leaders, including the 13 written by St Paul, known as the Pauline Epistles, which include the books Romans, Ephesians, and Corinthians. These epistles are intended to instruct the members of the early church during the first days of Christianity. The epistles of Roman writer Horace were widely imitated in later literature, particularly during the Renaissance period. The English poet Alexander Pope wrote many poetical Epistles, addressing them both to famous figures and to personal friends.

The Roman poet Ovid established a genre of fictional epistles from characters of myth and history to their lovers. An epistolary novel, is a story told as a series of (fictitious) letters.

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