

Paul

Making The Bible Come Alive

The Passionate One

Who was this person?

- The apostle Paul, prior to his conversion, went by the name of Saul of Tarse. (Acts 9:11) Before he became a follower of Christ, Saul was known to be mean and nasty. He didn't like Christians, he treated them terribly and wanted to put them in prison because of their belief in Jesus.
- His name: Saul was also called Paul (Acts 13:9). In those days, Jews often had two names. They had a Hebrew name (for him it was Saul) and they had a Greek-Roman name (Paul). After his conversion to become a follower of Jesus, and as he began his missionary journeys, he started going by the name Paul.
- Prior to his conversion, Saul was a Pharisee. He was very religious and studied under Gamaliel, receiving the finest training. (Gamaliel was a Pharisee doctor of the Jesus Law who was highly esteemed by the Jewish people—see Acts 5). Saul was considered to be a “good” Pharisee who knew the Bible, but he hated those who became followers of Jesus. He persecuted Christians for their faith. Saul even gave his approval for the stoning of Stephen, a young man who chose to follow Jesus.
- Despite his troubled past, the apostle Paul was an incredibly productive man. After persecuting and killing early Christians, God showed him undeserved grace and mercy. (1 Timothy 1:13)
- Paul was a key part of the beginning of the Church. He was a member of the church in Colossae. The New Testament Epistle (also known as a letter) to the Colossians was written by Paul to the church in Colossae, which was in Asia.
- Paul became a world traveler after he, too, converted to Christianity. He took on the role of a “missionary” or “global worker”, telling everyone he could about Jesus and teaching them how to walk in the ways of Christ.
- Paul wrote 13 New Testament books of the Bible. Here's more about each one:

Romans—a letter sent to the Christians/the church in Rome. This book shows how Jesus' death makes us right with God and how Jesus will help us live a good life. (Written in A.D. 57)

1 Corinthians—a letter to the Christians in Corinth. Paul was wanting to help them solve problems they were having in their church. (Written in A.D. 55)





2 Corinthians—a second letter to the Corinthians, letting them know that Paul still loves them even though their church was having many problems. (Written in A.D. 55)

Galatians—a letter sent to several churches in the province of Galatia, helping believers rely on Jesus rather than on trying to keep God's law. This letter tells of Jesus dying for our sins and saving us. It speaks of how we belong to Christ and can serve others in love, doing good to all people. (Written in A.D. 48-53)

Ephesians—a letter to the Christians in Ephesus, letting them know that the church is not a building; its people who love Jesus and obey Him. (Written in A.D. 60)

Philippians—a smaller book sent to the Christians as Philippe, thanking the people for their love and gifts, and giving them instruction on how to live good Christian lives (i.e. being humble, living at peace with others, thinking on good things) (Written in A.D. 61)

Colossians—a letter to the Christians at Colosse, showing that Jesus is supreme and that He forgives our sins and saves us completely. It tells us how to live holy lives. Likely written while Paul was in prison. (Written in A.D. 60)

1 Thessalonians—a letter Paul sent to the Christians at Thessalonica (the capital city of Macedonia). Paul was there on his second and third missionary journeys. This letter teaches Christians how to live in a way that pleases God, and how to be a good Christian example for others. (Written in A.D. 51)

2 Thessalonians—another letter Paul sent to the Christians at Thessalonica, telling them to work hard until Jesus comes again. He warns them against being idle and encourages them to stand firm. He warns them to keep their distance from those who are lazy or disruptive, and those who say they are Christians but don't follow the ways of Christ. (Written in A.D. 51/52)

1 Timothy—a letter Paul sent to his younger helper, Timothy, giving him advice on his leadership role in the church. He tells him to beware of false teachers, and how to choose leaders, how to be an example for others and not to love money. He gives advice to the rich and talks about the Christian family. (Written in A.D. 63-65)

2 Timothy—another letter Paul sent to his younger helper, Timothy, in which he encourages Timothy to keep working hard and teaching well even after Paul dies. He references

following good examples of those in the faith, relying on the authority of Scripture and handling it correctly, following sound doctrine and avoiding pointless arguments, and continuing to use the inspired Word of God to equip Christians to do the work God has for them to do. (Written in A.D. 67-68)

Titus—a letter Paul sent to a young helper named Titus, showing him how to be a good teacher and leader. (Written in A.D. 63-65)

Philemon—a personal letter Paul sent to a Christian named Philemon, asking him to welcome back a runaway slave named Onesimus. Onesimus had stolen from his master and then ran away. He met up with Paul in Rome and became a Christian. Philemon was a member of the church in Colossae, where Paul was also from. They were friends so Paul felt comfortable writing and asking this of Philemon. Likely written from prison. (Written in A.D. 60)

What is this person known for?

- The beginning chapters of the book of Acts tell about the forming of the early church. In Acts chapter 9 it states that *“Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples”*. He had gone to the High Priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that he could take the men and women who had chosen to follow Christ, as he wanted to throw them in prison in Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). But, God had a different plan! As Saul journeyed on the road towards Damascus, he fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”* It was the Lord speaking directly to him! He knew that because He heard a response that said, *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”*. In that moment Jesus told him to get up and to go into the city, and that he would be told what to do when he got there. Everyone travelling with Saul was speechless because they had heard the sound but didn’t see anyone around them ... and Saul was on the ground. When Saul got back up, he could see nothing. His sight was gone. His travelling companions needed to lead him by the hand into Damascus. He remained blind for three days. During that time, Paul did not eat or drink anything.
- While Paul was in Damascus, he met a man named Ananias. God had spoken to Ananias in a vision and told him to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and to ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul (Acts 9:11). Paul had been praying, and God had given him a vision of a man named Ananias who would come and lay hands on him so that his sight would return. Ananias was very concerned because he knew about Saul’s bad past and that he wanted to capture Christians, have them arrested and put in jail. But the Lord spoke to Ananias and said, *“Go! This man is My*





chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for My name.” So, Ananias was obedient and did exactly as the Lord had told him. He went to the house, entered it, and put his hands on Saul. He told him why he was there. Immediate-y, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized with the Holy Spirit right then and there! He then started to eat again and regained his strength. Jesus did exactly what He had said he would do!

- Upon regaining his sight, and after spending several days with the disciples, Saul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. The Jews were shocked as they knew him as the one who wanted to raise havoc and take people to jail. But Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews in Damascus as he proved to them that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 9:10-22)
- Paul was known for speaking clearly and directly to people about their sinful ways, so they would turn from sin and live for Jesus. In chapter 3 of Colossians, Paul addresses the church and speaks to them about living as those who have been “made alive in Christ”. He lists the sins (wrong behaviours) they had before they became Christians, and told them how now it was time to give up those sins and live for Christ. He even addresses how wives, husbands and children should act towards one another in Colossians 3:18-21.
- Paul was a hard worker, giving his life to make the gospel known so many would come to Christ and live for him. He even tells the Colossians, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?

- **To remind us that God is able to forgive.** We need to see and realize the greatness of the love, grace and mercy Jesus gives to those who turn to Him. Even if someone has despised God and mistreated others in terrible ways, if they turn to Jesus and give their heart and life to Him, and choose to change their ways, Christ is willing to forgive even the most sinful of people.
- **To remind us of God’s transforming power.** A person can have a life-transforming experience when they receive the

love of God, and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. That is exactly what happened to Paul. He had a life-transforming encounter with Christ when Jesus spoke to him on his journey on the road to Damascus.

- **To help us realize what God desires of us as His followers.** He wants us to give our lives to telling others about Him and spreading the gospel to places where people need to hear the good news of Jesus.
- **To remind us God is always with us.** Regardless of where we are, or what we might come against, God is always with us. Paul was put into a prison cell for proclaiming the name of Jesus, but yet he continued to sing praises to God and shared the good news of Jesus. He was no longer a mean or dangerous person that people should be afraid of him, but still he had a guard who watched over him while he was in prison. Paul had shown that he was a changed man and that he could be trusted. (Acts 28)
- **To remind us that God has called each person to share His “Good News”.** There are 117 verses in the book of Acts alone that reference Paul preaching, telling people of the good news of Jesus. This is important because that is what God wants all of us to do as believers He wants all His children to tell others about him, not just pastors and those who have been to Bible college and received a theology degree. We must all share our faith, and let others know of God’s love for them, through His Son, Jesus! Maybe one day you will go to Bible college which would be a great plan if that is how God directs your path as you get older. In the meantime, read your Bible every day and pray and ask Jesus to guide you in all your ways. Rely on the Holy Spirit to speak to you about what it is that you should do with your life.
- **To remind us to follow Jesus with everything we’ve got.** Because of the many important instructions he needed to give to those who received his many letters (which became actual books in the Bible), Paul listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit and followed God’s leadings as he journeyed far and wide, taking the gospel message where it needed to go. Paul’s life is a great example of what it looks like to follow Jesus 100%, sharing the love of Jesus every day, wherever you may go and to whomever God puts into your path.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?



- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

MORE IN GOD'S WORD

Find a Bible that has maps at the back. Most Bibles with maps will be able to show you the following:

- Paul's first missionary journey—Acts 13:4 to 15:35. It starts and ends in Syrian Antioch.
- Paul's second missionary journey—Acts 15:36 to 18:22. It starts and ends in Syrian Antioch.
- Paul's third missionary journey—Acts 18:23 to 21:17. It starts in Antioch and ends in Jerusalem.
- Paul's journey to Rome—Acts 27:1 to 28:16. It starts in Jerusalem and ends in Rome.

Paul had been in Corinth teaching the Word of God for a year and a half to the Corinthians. Some opposed him and became abusive towards him (Acts 18:5-6) so he left those and went to other people who listened and received the gospel message he had to share. (Acts 18:7-8). In Acts 18:9-10 the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, *“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”* It was in Corinth that Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching people the Word of God.

When he left Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and travelled to the city of Ephesus. There he found some disciples. He prayed over them, baptized them and saw them get filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Paul went to the Jewish synagogue and preached there for three months, but was not well received in that setting, so he went along on his journey, taking some of the disciples with him (Acts 19:1-10). During Paul's journey, he saw God do many miracles through his ministry. He spent two years in Ephesus and planted a church among the Ephesians. Acts 19:10 tells us, *“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord”*. About ten years after the church had begun (A.D. 62), Paul wrote a letter to the people of Ephesus. We know it as the book of Ephesians in the Bible. He commended them for their love and how they were growing in their faith in Christ. They had organized themselves well to share the love of Jesus with both Jews and Gentiles. Paul commends their genuineness of faith in his final sentence of his letter to the



Ephesian church where he says, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love”. (Ephesians 6:24)

But, later we read in Revelation 2:1-7, as John writes the revelation from Jesus Christ, he speaks to the church in Ephesus and acknowledges their deeds, hard work and perseverance, that they had forsaken the love they had at first. They had fallen away from their “first love”. In this passage the church is told to repent and do the things they did at first. The church at Ephesus was complimented for what they had done, criticized for what they were doing wrong and given instructions to return to their obedient ways so they, too, could one day eat from the Tree of Life and be in Heaven with God.

This part of Paul’s journey really shows us the importance of two things:

- It is important that we as believers share the story of Jesus with others, leading them to a place where they accept Christ as Lord and Saviour and choose to follow Him.

Have you led someone to Jesus before?

Who do you know that needs to hear of God’s love for them so they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

- It is important to be part of a church body that is strong, obedient, works together well, and does not fall away from the work God has called them to do in reaching others for His kingdom.

How would you describe your church?

How can you be more involved?

When Paul chose to acknowledge and accept Christ, everything changed for him.

And, will you determine to be part of the church family, working together with those who are younger, older, and of other ethnic backgrounds, as the body of Christ who will tell others the good news of Christ?

If God calls you to be a missionary and travel to other parts of your country or somewhere else in the world to tell people about Him, will you be obedient to His call? Would you go, like Paul did, or would you resist God’s call and hope that someone else would go instead of you?

If God wanted you to do and study His Word on a full-time basis when you finish high school, would you be willing? Or, would you consider going somewhere else just because that’s where your friends might be going?



If God called you to plant a church, would you do it? Can you think of a place in your province or country where a church is needed? Begin to pray that God would call someone to go there. Maybe one day that someone might just be YOU!

