

Paul's Letters

(God's True Story)

Introduction

Teacher, put a Bible into a bag along with a variety of mail, such as bills, letters, greeting cards, advertising, catalog, eMail, magazine, etc. Keeping the Bible until last, pull one piece of mail out at a time and ask the children to describe it. Discuss the mail by asking questions such as, “*Who is this mail from? What is this mail trying to get me to do? What message does this mail tell me? Why might I be excited to get this mail?*” Then, hold up the Bible and ask, how would you describe this letter? How is God's letter to us different from the rest of the mail I've received? (It was written long ago; its message is for everyone.) What makes God's Word better than any other message to us? (It's true. It tells the good news about Jesus.)

The Bible is like a letter from God — written just to me and you. Today we're going to talk about Paul's letters.

Opening Prayer

We love You, Lord. Thank You for giving us Your Word, the Holy Bible. You speak to us so personally through the words that are written on these pages. It's like a love letter from You. I pray that we would always treasure our Bibles. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse:

*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
(Psalm 119:11)*

Lesson

Right after Jesus ascended into Heaven, His followers started telling everyone about the good news about Jesus. But the Jews persecuted the first Christians. They put people in jail for preaching the gospel and killed the followers of Jesus. As the persecution increased, many believers scattered and moved away from Jerusalem. As the believers

traveled around they told others about good news of Jesus. Many people were saved and churches began to start up.

As Peter, Paul, and others traveled, they wanted to be sure that the believers in these new churches would grow. So they wrote letters to the churches that had sprung up. Even though their writings started out as letters, they are now part of our Bible. These writers may not have known that the letters they were writing would be saved and read by Christians for the next two thousand years, but the Holy Spirit did. Every word in those letters was written at the direction of the Holy Spirit, just as the rest of the Bible was (2 Peter 1:21).

Turn to your Table of Contents. Twenty-one of the twenty-two books that follow Acts were written as letters. The apostle Paul wrote most of these letters. Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote the others.

Paul Wrote to Churches

Paul wrote to churches located in certain cities. I'll name the places where the letters were sent, and you look at the Table of Contents and tell me what you think the name of the book is. What do we call the letter he wrote to the church at Corinth? (Corinthians) Paul wrote two different letters to the believers at Corinth. Which book was written to the churches of Galatia? Which letter went to the church at Ephesus? How many letters did Paul write to the church in Thessalonica?

Paul Wrote to Individuals

Paul also wrote to individual men. Look at your Table of Contents and tell me how many books Paul wrote to Timothy? (Two) Each of Paul's letters has a special message—not just to the Christians who first received them, but each has a message for us today.

For example, when Paul was out on his missionary trips he started many churches and he was always looking for good solid men to pastor them.

Acts 16:1-3

Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father

was a Greek. (2) Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium, (3) so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek.

Timothy had good character. He was so well thought of by the believers in that area that Paul heard about him; his good reputation was spread about. He was respected highly as a young man who was faithful and honest. He had learned how to live a life that is well pleasing to God.

Children are not born wanting to live their lives in a way that pleases God. They are born totally self-centered. They demand to be fed, to be changed, to be held.... They have to be taught to live a life that is pleasing to God. Later when Paul wrote a letter to Timothy, he reveals to us how Timothy learned how to be such a godly man:

2 Timothy 1:2-5

I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. (3) Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (4) I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. (5) I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

Timothy was blessed to have a godly grandmother and mother who loved him enough to train him up in the ways of the Lord.

That same faith that Timothy has, dwelt first in his mother and his grandmother before her. Those two women were sincere believers in Christ and followed His ways. And they understood the importance of training up Timothy in the ways of the Lord, too. We don't really know much about Timothy's father, other than he was Greek. That could mean that he wasn't a believer, but maybe Luke makes a point of mentioning this to explain why Timothy wasn't circumcised.

Later in this same letter to Timothy, Paul describes the way many people will live in the last days:

2 Timothy 3:1-5

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (2) For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. (3) They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. (4) They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. (5) They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

Then in verse 10, Paul commends Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:10

But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance.

And Paul warns Timothy in verse 12:

2 Timothy 3:12

Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

And then Paul exhorts Timothy in verse 14:

2 Timothy 3:14-15

But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. (15) You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

This world is full of people that will tempt you to sin against God with your lips or your hands or even with your mind. So God has given parents the important job of teaching their children right from wrong.

How many of you have ever been naughty? Did you get disciplined? I bet there isn't a single one of you that likes to get scolded by your Mom or Dad, is there? But you see, someday they will have to answer to God for how well they taught you to love God and to make Him happy with everything that you think and say and do.

That's why It is so important for you to pay attention to your parents when they try to correct you. They do it because they love you so much. They don't want you to get into bad habits.

Parents have an awesome responsibility to teach their children how to steer clear of troubles in life. They need to train you how to make good choices in life, how to choose good friends, how to live your lives in such a way that brings honor and glory to God.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for inspiring Paul to write all these letters. And, thank You for making sure they have been kept safe for all these years. When we read them we can come to know You better! I pray that You will inspire us to read them often. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Have children write a letter to God.

Bible House Memorization Tool

Memorize the books of the New Testament by "room". Start with the four pillars of the New Testament (the gospels) at the front of the

house. Enter the house down the passage to where the **ACT**ion is, then move into the **Roman** pools. Then starting in the upper-right corner of the house, move clockwise from room to room.

Game Center

Bible Popcorn

Begin with all children seated. You say the name of the first book. Someone else pops up and says the name of the second book. That person sits down. As soon as he is seated, someone else pops up and says the third, and so on, until all the books have been named. Tell children they are not allowed to pop up two times in a row. This will keep the activity from being dominated by one or two children. If more than one child pops at the same time, that's fine. Remind children that once someone has said the name of the book, they should not repeat it but try to be the first to name another book.

Or, use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. Which books are called *The Gospels*? (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
2. Which book tells the history of the early church? (Acts.)
3. Which letters did Paul write to the church at Corinth? (1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians)
4. Which letter was written to the churches of Galatia? (Galatians)
5. Which letter went to the church at Ephesus? (Ephesians)
6. How many letters did Paul write to the church at Thessalonica? (2)

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