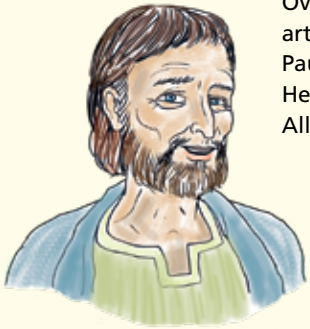
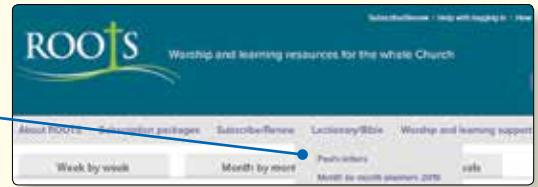


# A fresh approach to the letters of St Paul



Over the past year, ROOTS has published a range of articles and resources to support the exploration of Paul's letters in the context of worship and preaching. Here is a summary of all that has been produced so far. All these resources are available on the [WEB](#).



**'Interesting, helpful and made me think about presenting the message in a different way.'**  
Local Preacher

## Introducing Paul to all ages

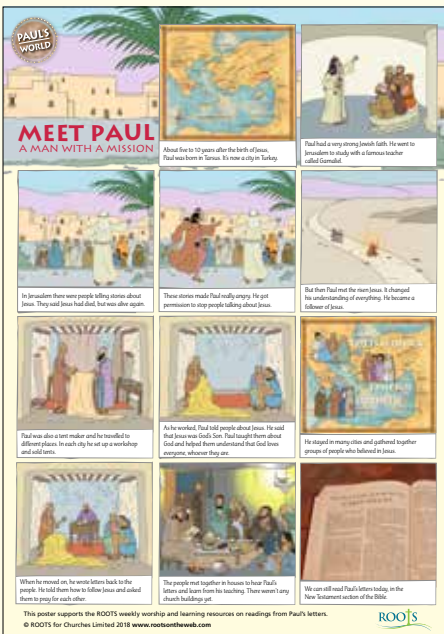
Paul wrote about the importance of following Jesus and knowing the love of God long before the gospel writers wrote their accounts of Jesus' life. Paul was so committed to telling people about Jesus' teaching that he devoted his life to setting up church communities and keeping in touch with them to encourage them to live as disciples.

Paul's letters form much of the New Testament. It might be tempting to say that Paul's writings are 'too difficult' for some – especially children – but we think that with support, people of all ages can hear and learn about Jesus from Paul, just as they did in early Christian communities.

- ▼ **A poster** that tells the story of Paul. Print out copies for older children and adults, or hold it up and talk through the pictures with younger children. Display for future reference.

- ▼ **A short video** to introduce Paul to adults and all ages. Also available as a PowerPoint presentation.

- ▼ **An article** about who Paul was and why he's important, to give you a brief overview. Print copies for adults and older children, or read to younger children.



**Supporting discipleship**

### Meet Paul – a man with a mission

**Who is Paul?**

Before you start exploring the weekly readings from Paul's letters, introduce the children and young people to Paul. We don't know a lot about him, but we know enough to get a sense of this very committed and dedicated follower of Jesus.

Below you will find some information about Paul, based on what we learn from his own writings, and what Luke wrote in Acts, about 15-20 years after Paul died. You could select from this information to create a picture of Paul in your own words for younger children. You can download the text [PDF](#) to hand it out to older children and young people.

There is also a short animated presentation downloadable from the website, suitable for older children and young people.

St Paul (his Jewish name was Saul) was the first person to write anything down about Jesus. His letters were written up to 20 years before the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were produced.



**Early life**

Saul was born around AD 10, into a Jewish family in the city of Tarsus (now in Turkey), which was part of the Roman Empire and ruled from Rome, hundreds of miles away. Saul was brought up speaking Greek and although he learned other languages during his life, he wrote in Greek.

**Missionary consequences**

Saul, who after this 'conversion' was known by his Roman name Paul, spent nearly 15 years thinking about what had happened to him, and he finally understood. God had called him to teach people about Jesus, so he spent the rest of his life doing just that. He learned to be a tentmaker so he could earn money and support himself. He would talk to people as he worked and met them about Jesus. Paul lived in many different places and walked huge distances from place to place. Sometimes he travelled by boat and he was disappointed more than once.

**Letters to church communities**

Small groups of people who believed in Jesus began to meet and worship in each other's houses. These groups of people, in cities like Corinth and Ephesus, were the very first churches. Buildings called churches came much later. When Paul moved on to a new place, he wrote letters back to these Christian communities, encouraging them to live in the ways Jesus had taught. Sometimes Paul gave them advice and guidance. Sometimes he told them off for things he'd heard they'd been doing – but he always told them that God loved them and that they were saved through Jesus' death and resurrection. The 13 surviving letters that St Paul wrote can be found in the New Testament section of the Bible, after the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

**An encounter with Jesus**

But then something extraordinary happened to Saul. Something that changed his life for ever. He was on his way to Damascus, determined to murder more Christians, when he had an amazing revelation from God. We don't know exactly what took place. Saul himself says that he saw Jesus. In the book of Acts, Luke says that Saul heard the voice of Jesus, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' What else happened, it turned Saul's life upside down. Everything he felt certain about didn't make sense any more. He had to work out what it meant, and what he was supposed to do now.

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## Background reading for you ▶

Find out more about life in the community Paul was writing to by reading a background article on the place, its history and traditions [WEB](#).

**'Brilliant. I used the video and the weekly children's sheets with the adults and several said that they had learnt a lot and loved the visuals.'**  
Methodist minister

## The weekly resources

We have created weekly **Paul's world sheets** (for you to download and print out) to give context to Paul's letters and help people of all ages to understand his teaching. Here are a few suggestions of how you might use the sheet in all-age worship.

This section takes us back to Paul's world, the place and the people, and helps us to make sense of what he says to the people of this place and time. Use the images to start or aid discussion.

As the title signifies, this sheet ties in the with the other AAA and CYP resources for this week.

Hand out copies of the sheet and begin with these contemporary thoughts and questions – always good to start with 'where we are'.

Interesting additional facts to adapt and use according to the age range of your group, and the time available.

**Paul's world Life in Corinth – Love is ... – 3-9 February 2019**  
Background information to support the weekly resources on 1 Corinthians 12.5-12 in print and online at [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com)

**Life today**  
Do you have a favourite advert? Advertisements on TV try to persuade us. They talk about the things that they are selling until it seems beautiful, clever, or delicious. They don't tell us, but they do try to make their product sound wonderful, when often it is quite ordinary.

**Imagine**  
You are a member of the Christian community in Corinth. The church here is a small group that meets in someone's house. Today a stranger has travelled from another city to come and teach you more about the Christian faith. He is very impressive. He knows lots about the books of the Old Testament and can quote different verses off by heart. He knows both Greek and Hebrew and can explain what the different words mean.

When he preys, his words sound very powerful and holy. You are very impressed. But then it is time to share a meal together. You realise that this man expects to sit at the best place and be served first. When a small girl comes up to him, he sends her away. He is also impatient with an old lady who cannot hear very well. This man seemed very impressive when he was talking, but he is not so impressive in everyday life.

**Did you know?**  
At the time of the church in Corinth, people used to go to special places to hear from the god Apollo. Sometimes a person who visited there gave a message in a heavenly language and the people would translate it. So the idea of speaking both human languages and the heavenly languages of the spirit would not have seemed strange to the people living in Corinth.

**Paul's first letter to the Corinthians**  
A nugget to explore with children Chapter 12, verse 1

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

Use the 'nugget' of Paul's teaching shown on the scroll as the focus throughout for your worship and learning.

Choose activities appropriate to your group to explore the theme further. Look, in particular, at the *All-age conversation* and the *Active worship* suggestions and ideas in the weekly resources. And don't forget to encourage everyone to *Live your faith!*

**'The pictures showing Hellenisation of towns and cities made the letters come alive. Paul's mission to the Gentiles and the challenges he faced suddenly had context.'**  
Lay Reader, C of E