



MEET PAUL: A BEGINNER'S PATH

Five short readings to connect the person, the journeys, and the letters.



Illustration: an imagined first-century setting, not evidence of a particular event.

You do not need to know the whole Bible to begin. Paul's letters grew out of real relationships: communities learning to follow Jesus, friends supporting one another, and disagreements that needed patient attention. Read one session at a time, with a Bible beside you. The links lead to fuller explanations whenever a question catches your interest.

Acts tells the story of Paul's travels from a later narrative perspective. Paul's letters let us hear him address particular communities and coworkers. Reading them together is rewarding, but they do not answer every historical question in the same way.

THE IDEA IN THREE STEPS

1

A changed life

Paul describes a calling that redirects his life toward Jesus.

2

Shared journeys

Travel brings him into lasting relationships with communities and coworkers.

3

Letters that connect

His letters teach, encourage, challenge, and keep those relationships alive.

Sources: Galatians 1:13–24 · Acts 16:11–40 · Philippians 1:3–11

You may share and adapt these original study resources with credit to PaulineLetters.com (CC BY 4.0). Bible text is not included.

A PERSON BEFORE A TIMELINE

Read: Philippians 3:4–11 · Galatians 1:13–24

Paul was Jewish and remained deeply shaped by Israel's Scriptures. He remembers opposing the movement he later joined. In his letters, encountering Jesus changes what he values and gives his work a new direction. "Apostle" means someone sent with a commission; Paul understands his calling as bringing the good news of Jesus to the nations.

Consider

What does Paul say changed, and what parts of his earlier life still matter to his story?

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What does the passage say?

What does it mean in its setting?

What might faithful action look like?

JOURNEYS THAT BECAME RELATIONSHIPS

Read: Acts 16:11–40 · Philippians 1:3–11

Paul's travels were more than a route across a map. In Philippi, Acts introduces households, conflict, imprisonment, and a new community. Later, Philippians remembers a continuing partnership. A place name becomes easier to remember when it is connected to people who welcomed, opposed, helped, or needed one another.

Consider

Which people stand out in Acts 16? What does Paul thank the Philippians for?

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WHY WRITE A LETTER?

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10–17 · Philippians 4:10–20

A letter responds to a situation. Paul may thank a community, address divisions, explain his plans, or ask friends to help someone. We hear one side of a conversation, so careful readers distinguish what the letter says from what they infer about its recipients. An “epistle” is simply a letter.

Consider

What need or relationship seems to have prompted each passage? Which details are explicit, and which are your best inference?

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THE GOOD NEWS AND A SHARED LIFE

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 · Romans 5:1–15 · Galatians 5:13–26

For Paul, the good news centers on Jesus' death and resurrection and the new life God gives through him. Grace means God's generous gift, rather than something people earn. This gift shapes how a community lives: trust in God belongs with love, patience, generosity, and service toward others.

Consider

How does Paul connect what God has done with the way people treat one another?

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What does the passage say?

What does it mean in its setting?

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READ A WHOLE LETTER NEXT

Read: Philippians 1:1 – Philippians 4:23

Short passages become clearer within a whole letter. Philippians is a good next step: it moves through gratitude, hardship, humility, hope, reconciliation, and generosity. Read it once for the overall movement, then return slowly to the passages that raise questions. You do not need to solve everything on your first reading.

Consider

What repeated word, relationship, or question would you like to follow through Philippians?

Keep exploring paulineletters.com/explore/philippians

What does the passage say?

What does it mean in its setting?

What might faithful action look like?
