



5

Encouraging the Churches

Key Theme

- Jesus will build His church.

Key Passages

- Galatians 1:1–3; Ephesians 1:1–2; Philippians 1:1–2; 1 Timothy 1:1–2, 3:14–15; Ephesians 4:31–32; Philippians 1:3–4

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify who Paul's epistles were written to.
- Describe why Paul wrote these letters—the epistles.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by working on the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: Encouraging the Churches Class Notes

Students will fill out the Encouraging the Churches Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

God used the Apostle Paul to write 13 epistles. These letters were sent to churches he had visited and to godly men: Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Paul encouraged the believers in these letters and instructed them in proper conduct. These letters are part of the New Testament and the inspired Word of God.



Activity 2: Four in a Row

Students will review the lesson by playing a game of Four in a Row.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



ENCOURAGING THE CHURCHES CLASS NOTES

- Print one Encouraging the Churches Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- Encouraging the Churches Class Notes for each student
- Encouraging the Churches Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



FOUR IN A ROW

- Print one Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Prepare a 16-section square grid on the floor with masking tape.
- Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from red and black construction paper.
- Bring in one beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item to toss for each team.

- Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- Masking tape
- 8 red and 8 black construction paper circles to mark four in a row
- Beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

The Apostle Paul serves as a great example to all Christians today. He loved His Savior. God used him in a mighty way to further the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul suffered trial after trial for Jesus's sake. He was beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, in danger in the sea, in danger of robbers; his own people came against him; the Gentiles came against him; false teachers were against him; he was often weary, hungry, thirsty, and cold (2 Corinthians 11:25–27). Paul's experiences show clearly that he did not count his own life dear but longed to finish the race set before him with joy (Acts 20:24).

And Paul loved his fellow believers. As he traveled throughout the regions during his three missionary journeys and finally to Rome, he was intent on strengthening the churches the Lord had established and encouraging the believers (Acts 15:41). In fact, Paul was daily burdened for the churches and the people in them. He had deep concern that they continue to grow strong in the faith (2 Corinthians 11:28–29).

Paul's love, commitment, and dedication to Christ's church are made very evident by a brief look at the New Testament where he is credited with writing at least 13 different letters to churches and church leaders. It is widely believed that Paul wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Many of these letters were written to the various churches Paul had taught during his visits. For example:

- “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . .” (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- “To the churches of Galatia . . .” (Galatians 1:2).
- “To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1).
- “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

Some of the letters Paul wrote, he wrote to specific men—friends and leaders in the church. These include the letters he wrote to Timothy who was Paul's beloved son in the faith.

- “To Timothy, a true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2).
- “To Timothy, a beloved son” (2 Timothy 1:2).

Paul also wrote a special letter to Titus, who was a Gentile and a beloved disciple and worker in the gospel (Titus 1:4). And he wrote to a fellow believer named Philemon (Philemon 1:1).

We know that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness in order that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17). And as you read the letters Paul wrote to his beloved friends and churches, that truth will be made clear to you. Paul wrote so that the early Christians would know how to conduct themselves in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:14–15). The “house of God” in verse 15 does not mean within the church building, but among the saints of God. Paul wanted the early Christians to understand how to act toward one another. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul gives clear instructions on Christian living and proper conduct among Christians. He writes that all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking should be put away as well as all malice. He admonished the church at Ephesus, and thus all believers in all churches, to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave them (Ephesians 4:31–32).

Paul was filled with genuine, heart-felt joy at the thought of fellow believers, and he wanted to encourage them in their faith. He often would write to the churches how grateful he was to God as he remembered their faith and fellowship in the gospel. Paul told the church at Philippi that he was confident that God, who started a good work in them, would complete it as the day of Jesus Christ approached (Philippians 1:3–6).

Paul had similar sentiments for all the churches. In his letter to the saints at Colossae, Paul wrote that he gave thanks to God for them and prayed regularly for them because of their faith in Jesus Christ and their love for each other and all Christians (Colossians 1:3–4).

The life of the Apostle Paul presents an amazing testimony to the grace of God and the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From Paul's very dark background of persecuting, arresting, and killing the early Christians (Acts 8:3) to his unceasing drive to further the very gospel message that changed him, God has shown vividly what it means to truly become a new creation in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We see

in this remarkable life that God's grace can extend to anyone. And God does save to the uttermost all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:25).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The letters of the New Testament are often called *epistles*. They were originally written as letters to churches or individuals. The word epistle comes from the Greek word *epistole*, which means "letter" or "message." Epistles were a principal form of communication in the ancient world, especially during New Testament times.

An epistle would have been written on a scroll. Often, it was dictated to a secretary (also called an amanuensis) and then reviewed by the author before being delivered by a messenger. In one of Paul's epistles, the amanuensis (or secretary) mentions himself when he writes, "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord" (Romans 16:22). Tychicus was one of Paul's messengers; he delivered several of his epistles (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). It appears that Paul signed each one of his epistles to verify that he was its author (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Epistles generally followed a similar format. Most of Paul's epistles begin with an introduction that identifies the author and any of his associates. It then mentions the recipients and gives a greeting. There is an introduction followed by the main body of the letter. Most epistles conclude with a general blessing and personal notes to individuals within the church that received the letter.

Twenty-one of the New Testament's twenty-seven books are epistles. Thirteen of these epistles were written by the Apostle Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Paul's epistles are often divided into subgroups. One group is called the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon), so-called because they were written during Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30–31). Another subgroup is the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). These letters were written to church leaders and include many teachings regarding practices within the church.

God used Paul as he traveled on four different journeys and planted churches wherever he went. Paul kept the churches in his heart whether he was with them or not. He felt responsible for them, like a father for his children (1 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians

2:11). The epistles he wrote to them were his way of encouraging, teaching, correcting, and staying in touch with those whom he loved.

The following is a breakdown of Paul's letters and the possible dates and locations from which he wrote them:

- Galatians (AD 50–51, from Syrian Antioch)
- 1 and 2 Thessalonians (AD 51–52, from Corinth)
- 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians (AD 54–56, from Ephesus)
- Romans (AD 57–58, from Corinth)
- Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians, Philippians (AD 61–63, from Rome)
- 1 Timothy (AD 64–66, from Macedonia, Rome, or Philippi)
- Titus (AD 64–66, from Ephesus or Rome)
- 2 Timothy (AD 65–66, from Rome)

Although Paul either penned or dictated these letters, he made it clear that he was speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The other apostles, as well as the early church, accepted these letters as words from God, like the rest of the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20–21, 3:15–16). In fact, when Jesus commissioned Paul to go, He told Paul that he was sending him as a witness of all Jesus would reveal to him (Acts 26:16–18).

These letters of Paul to the churches, along with the rest of the Bible, are inspired by the Holy Spirit. All 66 books of the Bible represent the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It is the only written Word from God and is the only basis of truth for the Lord's people and His church.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, thank you. Thank you for your work in the Apostle Paul. Because of your marvelous grace, he became a faithful servant to you. And now, 2,000 years later, we are encouraged and instructed because of what he wrote under your inspiration. Your plan is always perfect. Your Word is always true. Use this lesson to build on that foundation with my students. Impress upon them the truth that you are building your church still today and that they can be a part of it as they yield to your Word, believe it, and apply it to their lives.



COME ON IN

As students arrive ...

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Encouraging the Churches Class Notes

MATERIALS

- Encouraging the Churches Class Notes for each student
- Encouraging the Churches Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We'll complete the notes together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see what Paul did to instruct and encourage the churches.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

- ?
- Refer to *Paul's Missionary Journeys Map*. How many trips did the Apostle Paul make altogether? *Four.*
- ?
- That's right. And where did his last journey—the fourth one—take him? *To Rome.*
- ?
- Refer to the *Lesson 4 Lesson Theme Poster*. How did that journey go for Paul? The *journey to Rome?* *Allow discussion.*

► Refer to Paul's Missionary Journeys Map to follow Paul's travels as you teach the lesson.

To say it was rough sailing would be to put it mildly! With the storm and the rough seas, it seemed as though Paul would never get to Rome. But God had promised Paul he WOULD get there! Paul went through some very dangerous, exciting events, including a shipwreck, jumping overboard into the water, and being met by natives on a strange island. God protected Paul, and Paul did finally reach Rome.

? What kind of prison was Paul put in when he got to Rome? *Allow discussion.*

Paul was actually not taken to jail or prison, was he? He was able to move into a house or apartment. He had one Roman guard assigned to him, but he was free to have as many visitors as he wanted.

? What did Paul do while he was in Rome? *He continued to tell others about Jesus!*

Refer to *Paul's Missionary Journeys Map*. That's right. Paul loved His Savior. And God used Paul in a mighty way to preach the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ! Paul suffered a lot while he was on all these journeys. But nothing would stop him! He loved the new believers and all the churches he had been to while he traveled.

And in spite of all of his suffering and traveling, Paul still found time to write letters to the churches and to his friends! These letters became part of God's holy Word, the Bible. Open your Bibles to the table of contents at the front. I am going to read to you a list of all the books of the Bible that Paul wrote. These were actually letters written to churches and to other believers. Find the books (or letters) as I read them. You could put a little "P" or check mark by each book I read off. That will help you remember which books were written by Paul. These are all in the New Testament. Now check them off or put a "P" by them as you find them. Paul wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. All of these letters are known as "epistles" in the Bible. Epistle is just another word for letter.

Refer to *Paul's Missionary Journeys Map*. Have students find the various cities on the map. Some of these letters were written to churches Paul had visited or even helped to start on his missionary journeys. Let's see where these letters were sent. First, locate the city of Rome. Paul wrote the epistle of Romans to the people in Rome.

? Now, who do you suppose he wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians to? Take a look at the map. *The church in the city of Corinth. Find Corinth on the map.*

? And what about the book of Galatians? *The church in the area of Galatia. Find Galatia on the map.*

? The book of Ephesians? Who did Paul write that letter to? *The church in Ephesus. Find Ephesus on the map.*

? And then there is the letter to the Philippians. Who was that written to? *The church in Philippi. Find Philippi on the map.*

Paul was a very busy man. And he was inspired by God to write each of these letters to the people and the churches he loved.

Pass out the Scripture Sheets. These Scripture Sheets have a few verses on them. As we read them you will notice some things. I will ask some questions, and I want you to mark the answers on your Scripture Sheets.

- ? Before we get started with this, look at #1 on your class notes. Who will read that for us? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. God.*

This is something we all have to remember. God inspired Paul and all the writers of the Bible. What we read here—in the Bible—is God’s Word—not the words of men.

- ? So, let’s get started. Will someone read #1 on your Scripture Sheet from the book of Galatians for us? *Assign a reader. Galatians 1:1–3.*

Galatians 1:1–3

EXAMINE THE WORD

We’re going to mark these verses up, so we can get some information about each letter. Get your pencils ready!

Observe the Text

- ? OK. Look at the verse on your Scripture Sheet. Who wrote this letter? *Look in Galatians 1:1. Paul.* Underline Paul’s name at the start of verse 1.
- ? And how does Paul describe himself in that same verse? *An apostle of Jesus Christ.* OK. Underline the word “apostle” in that verse.
- ? Refer to *Paul’s Missionary Journeys Map.* Now who is this letter written to? Look at verse 2. *To the churches of Galatia.* Right. Underline “Galatia” on your Scripture Sheets. This letter was written by Paul to the churches in the area of Galatia.

Refer to Paul’s Missionary Journeys Map. Here is the area of Galatia. Paul visited Galatia on his first and second missionary trips. This letter probably went to the churches in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch Pisidia. All of these churches were in the area of Galatia.

- ? How did Paul start his letter to the Galatians? What did he want them to have? *Look in Galatians 1:3. He wished them grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ.*

Circle the words “grace” and “peace” on your Scripture Sheet.

- ? Let’s move on to #2 on your Scripture Sheets. Which verses are those? *Ephesians 1:1–2.*

Ephesians 1:1–2

- ? Will someone read those verses? *Assign a reader.*
- ? Who wrote this letter? *Ephesians 1:1. Paul.* Underline Paul’s name in the verse.
- ? And how did Paul describe himself? *Ephesians 1:1. An apostle of Jesus Christ.* OK. Underline that phrase in Ephesians 1:1.

► Have the students mark the answers on their Scripture Sheets for each of these passages below.

Philippians 1:1–2

- Refer to Paul's Missionary Journeys Map. Who did Paul write this letter to? We are still in Ephesians 1:1. To the saints who are in Ephesus. Good. Underline the name of the city, "Ephesus."

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians—the believers or the church in the city of Ephesus. Paul had traveled to Ephesus on his second and third missionary journeys.

- And what did Paul want the people to have? Look in Ephesians 1:2. Ephesians 1:2. Grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ. Good. You can circle the words "grace" and "peace."

Sounds like the letter to the Galatians doesn't it? That is because the same man wrote these letters.

- And who was that? Who wrote these letters? The Apostle Paul.

- Let's move on to Philippians 1:1–2. It is #3 on your Scripture Sheet. Will someone read that? Philippians 1:1–2. Choose students to read.

- Who was this letter from? Philippians 1:1. Paul and Timothy.

That's right. Underline those two names. This is a little different because this letter mentions Timothy and Paul. We know that Timothy was with Paul at the time he wrote this letter, and he wanted the people in Philippi to know Timothy was there.

- Refer to Paul's Missionary Journeys Map. Who was this letter written to? Look in verse 1. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi. Underline the name of the city on your Scripture Sheet, "Philippi."

- And again, what did Paul want the saints (or believers) in Philippi to have? Philippians 1:2. Grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ. Circle those words in this verse—"grace" and "peace."

- Refer to Paul's Missionary Journeys Map. Wow! Paul just kept writing letters. He wrote these letters to the churches in Galatia, Ephesus, and Philippi. He loved the churches and the people in these cities. He wanted them to hear from him and prayed that they would have the grace and peace of God in their lives.

The letters we just talked about were written to churches. But Paul also wrote to individual people. And the letters he wrote to different men were also written under the inspiration of God and included in the holy Bible! We'll read from one of those letters.

1 Timothy 1:1–2

- Will someone read #4 on your Scripture Sheet—1 Timothy 1:1–2—for us? Assign a reader.

- So. Who wrote this letter? 1 Timothy 1:1. Paul. Yes. Paul again. Underline his name in verse 1.

- ? And how did Paul describe himself? *1 Timothy 1:1. An apostle of Jesus Christ.* OK. Underline that, too.
 - ? Sounds familiar, doesn't it? So who did Paul write this letter to? It is in verse 2. *Timothy, a true son in the faith.* Underline his name.
- Paul was writing this letter to one particular man—Timothy! Timothy was a leader in the church and a very dear friend of Paul's. In fact, Paul thought of him as a son.
- ? Now what did Paul want Timothy to have? It is at the end of 1 Timothy 1:2. *Grace, mercy, and peace from God and Jesus Christ.* Yes. Circle the words “grace,” “mercy,” and “peace.”

Discover the Truth

Paul traveled a lot. He taught in many churches on his travels. And he loved the churches and all the believers. God used Paul to write 13 different letters—all part of God's holy Word, the Bible! We just saw that Paul wrote Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians to the churches he had visited and started in those cities. But some of the letters he wrote were written to certain men, too—special friends who were leaders in the churches—like Timothy.



READ THE WORD

But why did Paul write these letters? What did he want the churches, the church leaders, and his friends to know? Well, remember, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit. And everything Paul wrote was EXACTLY what God wanted him to write.

Let's take a look at some of the things God wanted Paul to tell the churches and believers through his letters.

Let's go back to our Bibles. Turn to 1 Timothy 3:14–15. Will someone read that please? *Choose a student to read the verses.*

1 Timothy 3:14–15

EXAMINE THE WORD

So Paul was writing to Timothy, right? When Paul wrote this letter he had plans to join Timothy soon. But Paul wrote this letter in case he wouldn't be able to do that.

Observe the Text

- ? Why was Paul writing to Timothy? The answer is in 1 Timothy 3:15. *So he would know how to conduct himself in the house of God.*
- ? What do you think “house of God” means here? *Allow discussion.*

Ephesians 4:31–32

Well, it would seem like it means the actual church building. But Paul meant more than how to act while in church. Paul wanted to teach the believers to have proper conduct toward each other. And Paul wrote an entire letter to Timothy to help him understand how, as a Christian, he should conduct (or act) to please God. So, one reason Paul wrote was to instruct the Christians how they should live to please God.

- ?
- What does this “proper conduct” include? Let’s turn to Ephesians 4:31–32. Will someone read that? *Choose students to read the verses.*

Ephesians 4:31 describes what proper conduct is NOT. You may not know the meaning of some of those words. But you know what anger is. And evil speaking. Basically, all of these words describe a heart that is hateful and not loving. None of these things describe the proper conduct that Christians should live by.

- ?
- Will someone read Ephesians 4:32 again? This tells how we ARE to conduct ourselves. *Choose a student to read the verse.*
- ?
- How are believers supposed to treat each other? *Be kind, be tenderhearted, forgive each other.*

Yes. This is the proper conduct Paul was talking about. This is how people who are Christians are to treat each other—with kindness, not with anger or hatred!

- ?
- Take a look at the class notes. Will someone read #2 for us? What is the answer there? *Assign a reader. Conduct.*
- ?
- And what about #3. First we read what is NOT proper conduct. What is the answer there? *Assign a reader. Hating.*
- ?
- And #4? What IS proper conduct? *Assign a reader. Love.*

Paul wrote his letters for another reason. We are going to take a quick look at that. Turn to Philippians 1:3–4. Let’s read it. *Assign a reader.*

- ?
- Paul was thankful for the Philippian church. Who did he thank? *Philippians 1:3. God.*

He thanked God whenever he remembered the church and the believers in Philippi.

- ?
- What did Paul do for these believers? Look in Philippians 1:4. *He prayed for them.*
- Yes! Paul wanted to encourage the Philippian church. He encouraged them by telling them that he thanked God for them, AND he prayed for them often. Most of Paul’s letters contain some kind of encouragement to the churches and believers. Paul wrote and encouraged them to continue in the faith.
- ?
- That leads us to #5 on the class notes. What is the answer there? Who will read it? *Assign a reader. Encourage.*

Philippians 1:3–4

Discover the Truth

Very good! Paul thanked God for the church in Philippi and I thank God for you all today. You are learning and growing in your understanding of God and what He says in His Word.

God inspired the Apostle Paul to write 13 letters to different churches and to leaders in the church. God wanted the churches, and all believers, to know how to act properly toward each other. He instructed them on how they should treat each other—they should be kind and tenderhearted to each other instead of hateful and angry. And Paul's letters encouraged the churches. Paul's letters told the churches how he loved them, thanked God for them, and prayed for them!

- ? Let's finish the class notes. Will someone read #6? Why did Paul write so many letters to the churches? *Assign a reader. Instruct.*



► If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.



Four In A Row

MATERIALS

- Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- Masking tape
- Beanbag, rolled up sock, or other appropriate item
- Red construction paper—8 sheets
- Black construction paper—8 sheets

INSTRUCTIONS

Use masking tape to make a 16-section square on the floor. The square should be four sections wide by four sections high. Each section should be equal in size. Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from the red and black construction paper. Or use some other appropriate markers for the two teams.

Divide the students into two teams—red team and black team. Give each team eight paper circles—either red or black. Students will toss the beanbag to a square. They will answer a question. If correct, they can put a marker in that square. To win the game, teams must get four circles in a row on the grid—by answering the questions correctly and throwing the beanbags accurately.

We are going to review now by playing Four in a Row. I'll put you into two teams: Red Team and Black Team. I want each team to throw the beanbag onto an empty square on the grid. I will then ask a question about what we have been learning. If your team answers correctly, mark the spot where the beanbag landed. If you don't get it correct, the other team will have an opportunity to answer and earn a space for their team. We will alternate teams until one team gets four circles in a row. Play the game using the Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God used Paul to write letters to churches and church leaders. Those letters were inspired by God to encourage Christians and to instruct the church in proper conduct. Later Paul's letters became a part of the New Testament.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Some of Paul's epistles (letters) were written to the churches in the cities he had visited—like Rome, Philippi, Galatia, and Ephesus. And some of Paul's letters were written to church leaders—Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Paul's epistles are a part of the Bible because God inspired Paul to write them.

These letters were inspired by God and written to encourage the churches. Paul was thankful for the Christians and prayed for them often. His letters also included a lot of instructions so the people would know how the Lord wanted them to live and grow in love and grace. Paul's instructions explained proper conduct in the church. Basically, he told them that Christians are called to a life of love, kindness, and forgiveness rather than a life of hatred, wickedness, and unforgiveness.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind students to practice the memory verse this week.

I want you to think about something. Paul spent time with many new Christians as he traveled. He taught them as much as he could about Jesus and godly living, but then he would have to move on to a different city, a different church. The letters Paul wrote back to the churches and the church leaders were very important! He was writing God's Word to them—and to all Christians who would come after them. Paul instructed and encouraged the churches with his letters. And those same letters instruct and encourage all believers today.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for the life of Paul and the instruction and encouragement we get through the letters he wrote.
- Ask God to help us to be faithful students of His Word, so that we will know who He is and how He wants us to live.