

Paul's Letters

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference
Romans 1:1-17

Lesson Focus
Our words can encourage the faith of others.

Bible Memory Verse
"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world." Romans 1:8

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids will reassemble a letter broken into phrases.	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Note cards, marker, colored pencils
Circle Time Kids will be reintroduced to Paul and his letters.	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source
Opening Prayer Kids will draw crosses on their neighbor's hand as they pray.	None	Washable marker

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Paul's Letters Story Kids will read the introduction to Paul's letter to the Romans and learn the Bible Memory Verse.	Spark Story Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible	Pen
And You Thought Snail Mail Was Slow! Kids will decode an important message from Paul.	Leaflets	Pencils

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>Send It in a Letter Kids will create a postcard to encourage someone's faith.</p>	Leaflets, Spark Bible Stickers	Pens
<p>You've Got Mail. . . Somewhere Kids will do a relay trying to bounce mail into the proper receptacle.</p>	None	Buckets (or baskets), balled-up old church bulletins (or similar), cotton hand towels (2 or more)

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>Closing Conversation Kids will wrap up the lesson and check out the Faith on the Go! application ideas.</p>	Leaflets	None
<p>Closing Prayer Kids will pray about all the ways we can spread God's message of love.</p>	Spark Family Pages	None

Bible Background

By the time Paul took a writing utensil to parchment paper to address the believers of Christ in Rome, he had already firmly established himself as a missionary to the Gentiles (non-Jews). After his conversion from being a persecutor of the followers of Christ, Paul set out on three journeys to spread the good news of Jesus and plant churches wherever possible. Probably written near the end of the third journey, Paul's letter to the Romans conveyed the hope of arriving at Rome in the future, asking for the Roman Christians' support, and parsing out his understanding of matters of faith. His words on righteousness and grace in this letter have guided the faith of believers for 2,000 years and counting.

Why This Story Matters

You are teaching Sunday school to encourage kids in their faith journey. In essence, you are a modern-day Paul and this class is your group of Romans! We are all ambassadors of the faith. Kids will have opportunities to encourage the faith of others in word and deed. They can do this now—they don't have to wait until they're adults!

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

Prior to class, write out a letter, putting one line on each note card. Use your own short letter or the example that follows. Add a "P.S." sentence for a larger class, or use fewer words on each note card.

Dear Class,
I want to tell you
something very important.
Today we will learn
about a man named Paul,
who traveled where he could go
and wrote letters to where he couldn't go
to encourage the faith of others.
Paul reminds me of you
because you encourage my faith
and I love to see
faith growing in you.
Your friend in Christ, (name)

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

Spark Resources

[Spark Activity Pages](#)
[Spark Coloring Pages](#)

Supplies

Note cards
Marker
Colored pencils

Say, **Mail call!** and hand out note cards as kids enter, one or two per kid. **I've sent you a letter, but it got a little scrambled in the mail. Work together to organize it on a table and figure out what I sent.**

If you have extra time, hand a couple older kids a marker and some note cards and let them create a note to unscramble.

Circle Time

Does anyone remember learning about a man named Paul? Who can tell me what his name was originally? (*Saul*) Saul hated Christians and tried to kill the followers of Christ, but then Jesus spoke to him and he changed his mind big-time! When Saul became Paul, he became one of the biggest supporters of spreading the word about Jesus. Today we're going to find out more about what Paul did and read part of a letter he wrote.

Spark Resources
Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies
Music source

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: "Books of the New Testament" (tracks 3 and 20 on Spark Song CD, page 18 in Spark Songbook)

Song 2: "I Am Not Ashamed" There are many versions of songs geared toward kids based on Paul's words in Romans 1:16; prescreen a couple videos online before class, and find one your group might enjoy.

Opening Prayer

Invite the group to sit in a circle. **As I say our opening prayer, I'd like you to pass the marker around our circle and draw a small cross on the top of the hand of your neighbor to the right.**

Spark Resources
None

Jesus, you spent a lot of time on the road, meeting people, talking to them. You inspired Paul to follow in your footsteps. He was not ashamed of your message and told many people about you! Help us to do like you and Paul, to use our words and feet to spread your message of love. Amen.

Supplies
Washable marker

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Paul's Letters Story

I've got some questions for you. Would you rather write or receive a letter? Do your parents encourage you to write thank-you notes when you get a gift from a friend or relative? How long are the notes? Invite kids to talk for a moment about their thoughts on sending and receiving mail. **Since you were born, electronic communication has, of course, replaced many of our letters. We don't use a stamp as often when we can message or email someone. But before those tools existed, and before you could call someone on a phone, mail was the main way people communicated across the miles. Sometimes people wrote really long letters to make the most of sending them!**

Today we're going to read the first part of a letter that Paul, a follower of Jesus, wrote to people he had not met. They were members of a new church in Rome, Italy, and Paul lived a long way away across the sea in Jerusalem. Paul had been traveling on several major trips, telling people about Jesus, starting churches, and helping new Christians. He had hoped to get to Rome, but since he was not yet able, he decided to send them a really, really long letter instead. Today we're going to read the opening to Paul's letter to the Romans. I'm going to pass a pen to two people interested in reading and invite them to pretend they are writing the letter on a sheet of paper as they read it.

Invite kids with Spark NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible. Invite two readers to read Romans 1:1-7 and Romans 1:8-16.

With your buddy, please find the Paul's Letters story in the Spark Story Bible. It is on pages 540-541. Do you see Squiggles? Take a moment to read this story together. When everyone is done, ask kids: **What was Paul trying to say and encourage the Roman church to do?**

Bible Memory Verse

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world." Romans 1:8

Learn the Bible Memory Verse in your buddy pairs, taking turns with the first and second parts:

First buddy: **"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you..."**

Second buddy: **"...because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world."**

Say it a few times, then switch lines. After kids practice, say it together half-and-half style as a class. Invite kids to put an "I Memorized It!" sticker next to the verse in the NRSV Bibles.

Spark Resources
Spark NRSV Bibles
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies

Pen
Paper

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
None

And You Thought Snail Mail Was Slow!

Have you ever wondered how mail comes to your home? It's pretty remarkable that for a few cents, someone will pick up a letter from your box, take it down the road, get it to a truck or an airplane, transport it across a few or thousands of miles, sort it into another truck, then deliver it to the address that might be written in messy writing on the front. How do you think mail was moved before cars and planes? It was moved by horses, wagons, ships, trains, and people. **Some messages were sent in a secret language or code so only one person could know what they said. Using the number key, work with your buddy to decode Paul's letter to the church in Rome.**

When kids have finished decoding Paul's message, invite them to read and discuss the Bible Bits together.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Pencils

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

Send It in a Letter

We get so few actual letters in the mail nowadays that getting one is kind of a thrill that makes people pay attention! Writing letters to inspire the faith of others didn't start and stop with Paul; you can do it too! Using the postcard in your leaflet, write a note to someone to boost their faith! Who might you write to? Ideas might include a friend, a family at church who just started visiting or brought a child to be baptized, a confirmation student, and so on. **Older buddies can help younger kids write words. Younger buddies can help older kids add a picture or design to the postcard.**

Ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special mark next to the item they found the most interesting.

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Pens
Colored pencils

You've Got Mail... Somewhere

There are many letters in the Bible, some written by Paul and some written by others. I hadn't thought about how hard it was to get them from the writer to the recipient before! It makes me appreciate it even more that we have them in our Bibles!

To help us remember and appreciate, we're going to do a fun relay game. Divide your class into two or more teams, supplying each with a hand towel. Using old newspaper or church bulletins, ball them up and give each team an equal number of paper balls. Place a basket at the end of each relay line. **Today you're going to pretend the balled-up paper is a piece of mail. With two people holding the four corners of the towel, you're going to try to bounce the mail on the towel while walking toward your basket, and then pop it in there with one final bounce! It**

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Buckets (or baskets)
Balled-up old church bulletins
(or similar)
Cotton hand towels (2 or more)

will be tricky to get it into the basket! If it misses the basket, I'll put it back in the pile at the starting line. The first and second people in line will start, and then the third and fourth will try, and so on down the line. Let's see who can get all their letters "mailed" first!

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Paul was a really important person in the church's history. Many of the letters he wrote are in our Bible, and we are still able to read his teachings and encouragement today.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Let's check out the Faith on the Go! ideas in the leaflet. Which couple would you like to try this week?

Supplies
None

Closing Prayer

Distribute Spark Family Pages to kids and look especially at the ideas for connecting with missionary families.

Spark Resources
Spark Family Pages

Invite kids to circle up. **Let's pray:**
God, you give us mouths to speak,
Hands to write,
Arms to embrace,
And feet to get moving.

Supplies
None

Bless the words of our mouths, the messages our hands write, the stretch of our arms, and the miles our feet walk, that they may all be done to tell, show, and bring others the message of your love. Amen.

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home the leaflet and Family Page.