



Letters  
from  
Paul

Summer Reading Challenge 2016



# Letters from Paul

In the middle of the first century there was a man named Saul who lived out a radically transformed life. He was the chief persecutor of the church who became the chief architect for the proliferation of the church. He sought righteousness through his own good works, yet began to teach that righteousness comes through faith alone. He moved from abhorring Gentiles to advocating for their place among God's people. He pursued status and power but came to embrace weakness, persecution, hunger, thirst, homelessness and imprisonment. The transformation he underwent was so thorough and complete that even his name changed from Saul to Paul.

What happened that this man would experience such changes? He encountered the resurrected Jesus. We learn about this encounter and gain access to Paul's transformation in the book of Acts. He went on to write 13 letters that appear in the New Testament. It is in these 13 letters that we hear Paul's call for all people to place their faith in Jesus Christ and experience ultimate transformation, the transition from death to life.

This summer we will study 11 of Paul's 13 letters. Our goal is that everyone who calls the Chapel their church home would gain a working understanding of these letters so that we might know Jesus Christ more fully and begin or continue to see His transformative power at work in our lives, community, church and world.

Please consider joining us in our Summer Reading Challenge as we deepen our engagement with God's Word. You may follow along with the use of this booklet, or download a reading plan at

*[wcchapel.org/summerreadingchallenge](http://wcchapel.org/summerreadingchallenge)*

Note: If you are interested in deepening your understanding of Paul's letter to the Romans, you may listen to our series, *The Gospel* from the fall of 2015 and/or *The Gospel in Life* from the spring of 2016. If you are interested in deepening your understanding of Paul's letter to Philemon, you may listen to a sermon covering that letter in our series, *The Gospel in Relationships* from the winter of 2016. Past message series can be found online at

*[wcchapel.org/past-message-series/](http://wcchapel.org/past-message-series/)*

WEEK 1: BEGINS JUNE 6

# Saul of Tarsus

## Reading 1 - Acts 7:1-8:8

Based on Stephen's speech, what was the message of the early church that Saul/Paul so strenuously objected to? How did God use the persecution of Saul/Paul for good?

## Reading 2 - Acts 9:1-31

What do Jesus' words in verse 4 teach you about the nature and character of the church? Why did Jesus ask Ananias to speak to Saul/Paul when He could have given Saul/Paul the full message Himself? What character traits would you need to develop in order act more like Barnabas in verse 27?

## Reading 3 - Acts 17:16-34

What is the root cause of Paul's distress in this passage? What distresses you about our world? What strategies does Paul use to win a hearing with the Athenians? Outline the key points Paul makes to the Athenians and describe the result.

## Reading 4 - Acts 19:1-20:38

How would you describe Paul's ministry in Ephesus? What were some of the high points and what were some of the low points? What element of what Paul said to the Ephesian elders is most relevant for our church and why?

## Reading 5 - Acts 26:1-28:31

In Acts 26:1-32 Paul gives what we would call today "his testimony." What part of Paul's story connects with your testimony? How do you see God at work in Paul's journey to Rome and his imprisonment in Rome?

# 1 Corinthians

## Reading 1 - 1 Corinthians 1:1-4:21

In chapter 1, why does Paul take such issue with boasting and what might it look like to “boast in the Lord?” Re-read 3:4-9; what do these verses teach us about church leaders and our spiritual growth? Answer Paul’s questions in 4:7 and write down some of the blessings Jesus has put in your life.

## Reading 2 - 1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20

Of all the possibilities on how to deal with the situation presented in chapter 5, why might Paul give the command to put this person out of the fellowship of the church and what benefit might such a decision possibly have? Looking at 6:1-11, when have you been wronged for the sake of Christ and what was the result? Looking at 6:12-13, see if you can figure out why there are quotation marks in these verses. What difference they make in understanding the passage?

## Reading 3 - 1 Corinthians 7:1-11:1

Re-read 7:23 and spend some time reflecting on the idea that you were bought with a price. What thoughts come to mind? Have you given yourself to anyone or anything as a bondservant? How might you seek freedom today?

## Reading 4 - 1 Corinthians 11:2-14:40

Look at 11:2-16, what part of this passage is most confusing and can you think of other passages of scripture that might help you understand it better? Look at 12:1-31, what practical step can you take to value parts of the Body of Christ that have different gifts than you? Look at 13:1-13, what aspect of love do you identify with most and what aspect do you need to commit to work on?

## Reading 5 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-16:24

Look at 15:1-56, what is one new thing you learned about the resurrection? Did this passage bolster your sense of hope in any way? If so, how?

WEEK 3: BEGINS JUNE 20

## 2 Corinthians

### Reading 1 - 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:17

What is Paul's view of suffering? How is Paul's sense of mission evident in these verses? Where is the root of our hope and encouragement?

### Reading 2 - 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:10

How is the New Covenant better than the old one? Where do we draw our perseverance from? How does the promise of heaven give us courage?

### Reading 3 - 2 Corinthians 5:11-7:16

What does our role as ambassadors of Christ mean for our lives? How do repentance and reconciliation work together? Where does Paul's joy come from?

### Reading 4 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

What does it mean to give ourselves to God? What does generosity look like in your life?

### Reading 5 - 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:14

How does humility interact with boasting? Why must we examine ourselves?

# Galatians

## Reading 1 - Galatians 1-2:10

Why is it important for Paul to establish the credibility of the Gospel he is telling people? What other “gospels” do we still find being preached today that are different than Gospel of Christ?

## Reading 2 - Galatians 2:11-3:22

What divisions in society was Paul directly addressing through his ministry? What divisions do we face in our lives today that may actually lead to us demonstrating a faith by works of the law rather than grace? How can you begin to join Paul in breaking those divisions?

## Reading 3 - Galatians 3:23-4:31

According to Paul in this passage, what is the difference between being a slave versus a child of God? If Paul says that the “principles of the world” are weak and worthless, why do we still follow them at times?

## Reading 4 - Galatians 5:1-26

What does freedom in Christ look like? How does the law fit into our new freedom in Christ?

## Reading 5 - Galatians 6:1-18

What are the responsibilities and dangers in seeking to love others? Now that you have read Galatians, How would you summarize the message of this book in 2 or 3 sentences or bullet points?

# Ephesians

## Reading 1 - Ephesians 1:1-23

Paul opens this letter with a list of all the things that our faith in Christ brings us. What stands out to you the most from this list? Why?

## Reading 2 - Ephesians 2:1-22

What is our role in the salvation process? Where do our good works fit into God's plan for us?

## Reading 3 - Ephesians 3:1-21

Paul talks a lot about how we all have access to God's Spirit. How does Paul describe what this new access grants us? How have you seen this come to fruition in your own life?

## Reading 4 - Ephesians 4:1-5:20

Paul gives a lot of practical applications for what maturity in Christ looks like. What do you find to be the most challenging aspects of maturity? How can you begin to further submit to Christ in those aspects of your life so that you can grow in maturity?

## Reading 5 - Ephesians 5:21-6:24

Verse 21 is the key to accurately understanding the principles laid out in this section. In what ways does this passage challenge you to implement mutual submission in the key relationships of your life? Paul closes the book of Ephesians by comparing the spiritual realm of our lives to preparation for a battle. What steps of preparation do you need to implement in your own life so that you can be "strong in the Lord?"



WEEK 6: BEGINS JULY 11

# Philippians

## Reading 1 - Philippians 1:1-1:30

What is the Spirit of Paul's letter to the Philippian Church? What is Paul's focus surrounding "the gospel?" To whom might you offer a "thank you" for partnering with you by living faithfully in accordance with the gospel?

## Reading 2 - Philippians 2:1-2:11

What is Paul's encouragement to the Philippians through his description of Jesus? What phrase jumps off the page to you out of Paul's description of Christ (vs 6-11)? How could the Spirit use this phrase to transform you today?

## Reading 3 - Philippians 2:1-2:30

In light of who Paul describes Jesus to be, how does he challenge the Philippians and you as Christ's follower? Where might God be asking you to "shine" so you are not "laboring in vain" (vs 16)? Paul intends to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church; to whom might you be an encouragement in the gospel?

## Reading 4 - Philippians 3:1-3:21

What is Paul's focus upon? What does he denounce and what does he claim as his? Sacrificing worldly status for eternal things transforms. How have you seen this take place in others' lives or in your own?

## Reading 5 - Philippians 4:1-4:23

Are you content? What is the source for Paul's contentment in all circumstances? Create a list of ways God has provided for you in your life.

# Colossians

## Reading 1 - Colossians 1:1-1:20

What is Paul thankful for in these verses and how often do you express gratitude for these things? What young believers do you pray for daily? How do you pray for them? List all the ways that Paul describes Jesus in verses 15-20. What stands out to you?

## Reading 2 - Colossians 1:21-2:5

What does being a minister of the Gospel entail? What is Paul's hope for this church and others?

## Reading 3 - Colossians 2:6-2:23

What does Paul mean by the statement, "so walk in him?" What are some of the things we guard against in our faith? What are some of the dangers that Paul is referring to here?

## Reading 4 - Colossians 3:1-4:1

What does Paul mean by, "set your minds on things that are above?" What does putting off the old self and putting on the new self look like in our daily lives? How does gratitude change our lives? How are our relationships changed as a result of our "new selves?"

## Reading 5 - Colossians 4:2-4:18

In what ways does Paul challenge the way we speak to and interact with outsiders? What are things that we can do as we wait for Jesus to return?

# 1 Thessalonians

## Reading 1 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:16

For what does Paul thank God (1:2-3)? Who is mentioned as suffering for their faith in Christ (1:6 & 2:14)? How has God encouraged you when you suffered for your faith in Christ?

## Reading 2 - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

What is the crown in which Paul will glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus? Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonians? In Paul's efforts to encourage the Thessalonians, he was also encouraged. Has this ever happened to you?

## Reading 3 - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:11

Paul tells the Thessalonians that they should live holy (or sanctified). What are all the different reasons that Paul gives as to why they should live holy? Why can Christians grieve with hope?

## Reading 4 - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-5:28

Paul peppers this entire passage with instructions on how to live. Which one feels most difficult to apply today? Will you pray repeatedly today for God to help you obey the instruction he has given you with hope in your heart?

## Reading 5 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:28

Why do you think Paul wrote this letter? How did Paul encourage the Thessalonians? What truth does Paul share that can encourage you today?

WEEK 9: BEGINS AUGUST 8

## 2 Thessalonians

Reading 1 - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

What does Paul boast about in regards to the Thessalonians (1:4)?

Reading 2 - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

What does Paul tell the Thessalonians to do in response to God's calling (2:13-15)? Is there an area in your life where you are being tempted to compromise? Where might God be calling you to stand firm today?

Reading 3 - 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

What problem is the church in Thessalonica having (3:6)? What practical advice does Paul give in dealing with this problem (3:10)?

Reading 4 - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3:18

How does this letter apply to you?

Reading 5 - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3:18

What about this letter can you share with someone else?

# 1 Timothy

## Reading 1 - 1 Timothy 1:1-2:15

Look at 1:15, why would Paul claim to be the foremost of sinners? What benefit could you gain from this perspective? Look at 1:18, who can you call, “my child,” that is not your biological or adopted child and what can you do to encourage them today?

## Reading 2 - 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Take a few moments and pray for the Elders, deacons, pastors and staff of the Williamsburg Community Chapel. Why do you think the character qualifications for church leaders are so strict?

## Reading 3 - 1 Timothy 3:14-4:16

Look at 3:16, why does Paul call Godliness a mystery? Take a few minutes and ponder the mystery. Write down some of what you learned. Look at 4:16, what discipline do you need to embrace to “keep watch on yourself?”

## Reading 4 - 1 Timothy 5:1-25

Look at 5:1-8, how can these verses help us embrace the intergenerational community Jesus has gathered together at the Chapel? Look at 5:24-25, knowing that all sin is eventually exposed, is there anything in your life that needs to be confessed today? After confessing to God, is there another person you need to confess to as well?

## Reading 5 - 1 Timothy 6:1-21

Look at 6:11, what do you need to flee? What do you need to pursue? Look at 6:20, how can you guard the deposit of faith Jesus has put inside you?

## 2 Timothy

### Reading 1 - 2 Timothy 1:1-18

Look at 1:7, where has fear crept into your life? How can you replace fear with faith?

### Reading 2 - 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Where do you need to invest in someone in the manner that 2 Timothy 2:2 talks about? In 2 Timothy 2:3-7, Paul uses three metaphors to describe the Christian life. What are they and what can you learn from them and apply to your relationship with Jesus?

### Reading 3 - 2 Timothy 2:14-3:17

Look at 2:24, is there an area of your life where you have become quarrelsome? Ponder the root cause of this character trait and pray to trust God more fully in this area of your life. Look at 3:12, what hardship are you enduring? How might Paul's instructions change your perspective?

### Reading 4 - 2 Timothy 4:1-22

Look at 4:6-8, Paul's actions in the present are always rooted in his hope for the future. Spend some time pondering the future Jesus has already secured for you. How could understanding your future in Christ might impact your decisions today?

### Reading 5 - 2 Timothy 1:1-4:22

What passage did Jesus use to speak most clearly to you today? What is Jesus teaching you through that passage or through the letter as a whole?

# Titus

## Reading 1 - Titus 1:1-1:9

Why is Paul writing Titus? How has God used others' faithfulness to impact your own journey? How might God be using your faithful following for the sake of those in your life?

## Reading 2 - Titus 1:10-1:16

Consider your ways. Of what criticism in the passage might you be guilty? Allow God to rebuke you and lead you to resolve this with him.

## Reading 3 - Titus 1:5-1:16

Compare and contrast the division Paul creates in this passage. Where have you experienced the benefit of faithful leadership? Where has the Spirit empowered you to live faithfully in ways you were unable on your own?

## Reading 4 - Titus 2:1-2:15

What type of relationships is Paul prescribing for Titus' church? Do you possess any intergenerational relationships? Why has God called his church and specifically the Chapel to these relationships?

## Reading 5 - Titus 3:1-3:15

Where does disobedience lead according to Paul? Where has obedience led you? What are ways God reassures you to trust and obey his words through Paul? Reflecting upon Paul's words to Titus, where is God leading you, and what might you resolve to do in response?



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