

The Year of St. Paul



CAN I REALLY THE DEPTH OF St. PAUL & HIS WRITINGS?

The sword that St. Paul is so often shown holding is not a reference to his character. Paul the convert, apostle and missionary is also usually seen holding a book, which better describes his purpose — a defender of the Word of God, which he became through his letters, his life, and his teaching. The sword indicates the type of death he suffered because of this faith he so staunchly defended and explained.

That drive, the determination to “get it right” that filled St. Paul’s heart and life, was also his desire for the people he came to love and brought to share this faith. But so often his letters — Epistles — create a picture of man so wanting to tell his story that he never takes a breath. Those who hear this man have been breathing for him, and now need to hear the story again. Paul causes us to read and re-read, but in the context of growing in understanding and acceptance.

So don’t become frustrated in reading the wonderful works of St. Paul. They are love letters to the beloved — by a lover that chose not to be contained by any mere earthly obstacle.

Over the course of the next eleven months — right through June of 2009 — we’re going to take a sightseeing tour of Paul’s Epistles, one letter each month. We’ll get to experience them in a simplified manner that allows us to see St. Paul as a great lover of God even before his conversion. Here’s how it’s planned to work.

WEEKLY BULLETIN INSERTS

You’ll need to get a bulletin each week. The insert is planned to be only two sides of a paper. Each month will be planned and written by a different staff member.

August will be spent in learning more of St. Paul and the work leading up to his three missionary journeys. These ultimately led to his letters — the Epistles — written to communities he had started, except for his letter to the Church at Rome which he had planned to visit before expanding the Kingdom further west to Spain.

We’ll study Paul as he needs to show the early Church that his past persecutions were flawed, that

his apostleship is directly from Christ, that his tenacity is meant to help people come to the freedom he now recognizes in and through Jesus Christ.

Beginning in **September**, with the First Letter to the Thessalonians, the following procedure will be maintained for each month.

First Week:

Overview of the people, the social situation, what we know precipitated the letter, a comparison to our own culture and time, a wheel similar to the one shown on the reverse side of this insert to help us segment the letter into understandable sections, and some reflective questions for consideration among friends.

Second & Third Weeks: Highlight specific themes which are the major purposes for writing the letter. Difficulties or encouragements will be shown. And again, reflective questions will be provided for us.

Fourth Week: Consider this a “loose ends wrap-up session” when we’ll address minor details and our “Connect-the-Dots,” that is, tie the many teachings of Paul to the message Jesus Christ and the New Testament.

There are three months with five Sundays. These extra Sundays will be used to address the Pastoral Letters sent to Titus and Philemon, and to give us a different look at St. Paul’s letters during Advent and Christmas.

Our Overall Goal

This is simple, right? To be able to grasp the rich meaning of Paul’s Epistles (letters).

Not so fast. This is not academia! Yes, we need the head-knowledge. But the reason for that is not a university professorship.

We’re doing this to realize we can be great lovers like Paul, even as we go through our own conversion of heart and mind — if we choose.

And for Paul? It was all about God First!

GOD FIRST
Year Three, Part 1
August 3, 2008

The Acts of the Apostles

The wheel below is a diagram of the Acts of the Apostles as found in the book, "Reading the Acts, Epistles and Revelation" by the Rev. Kingsley E. Dalpadado, OMI, now deceased. The outer ring indicates the major focus and the chapters and verses a particular section of the Acts of the Apostles addresses. The first are the prologue, the Ascension and Pentecost, the Primitive Church, Stephen's witness and persecution, and the First Missions beyond Jerusalem. This material gives us a background on the growth and movement of the early Church. It goes all the way to chapter 12, verse 25, when Luke becomes specific with the work of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. You can see that in the sections very directed toward St. Paul's work, there are subdivision ring that provide clarity for the reader. Moving inward, the second ring gives us the chapter (concerning Paul, this is the third ring), and the spokes of the wheel then tell us specific stories and the verse in which a story begins. Ours during this Year of St. Paul begins with chapter 9, verse 1 when Saul is brought to conversion by our Lord.

The Acts of the Apostles

"Witnesses.....to the ends of the earth"

