

YEAR
LEVELS

7 & 8

TITLE

The Story of St Paul

STRAND

CHURCH AND TRADITION

SUGGESTED
DURATION

10 weeks

ENDURING
QUESTIONS

How does the Church make a difference?
How can I connect with community and Church?



Unit Focus

In this unit students study the development of the early church and the experiences of the Christian community. Students explore the life of St Paul, with a focus on his missionary work and the impact of his spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Students critically reflect upon the Church today and compare it with life in the early Christian communities.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year Eight:

Students examine and explore the development of the early Christian communities through the life and mission of St. Paul.

Students explain, through examples, the missionary nature of the Church today.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Describe the events that led to the formation of the early Christian communities.
2. Identify the characteristics of the early Christian communities.
3. Describe significant events in the life of St Paul and his impact on the early church.
4. Compare and contrast the characteristics of the early church and the Church today.

Key Understandings for Students

- Jesus commissioned his disciples – “Go and teach all nations”. (Mk 16:15)
- God sent the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide Jesus’ followers. The life of the Church begins with the Pentecost event. (Acts 2:1-13; Acts 2:14-42)
- The followers of Jesus believed they were left with the task to complete the bringing about of the Reign of God.
- The conversion of Paul had a significant impact on the development of the early Church.
- It was through Paul that a large number of Gentiles were brought into the Christian movement.

- The Acts of the Apostles, written by St Luke, in the New Testament deal with the history of the earliest Christian community and contains a major section on the missionary work of St Paul.
- These communities lived lives of service. They shared all they had with one another.
- There were a variety of roles that people played in the early church.
- When members of a Christian community make the most of their individual gifts, the community becomes the sign and instrument of the spirit of Jesus.
- The Church, even today, believes it exists for the benefit of the whole human race and for the sake of continuing to bring about the Reign of God.

Student Context

The natural curiosity and enthusiasm of commencing secondary schooling can do much to help bridge a very real gap in the knowledge of students who will have little or no experience of Church in terms of parish life, or who have a different religious tradition and for whom the concept of church is either unknown or may be lived out in ways that differ from the Christian tradition. Other students will have a family background which makes them familiar with the concept of Church from their family's involvement and participation in parish activities.

It is important to acknowledge the students' past experience, or lack thereof, of family, school and parish community, and to help them own their own experience and be able to build on it.

Theological Background for Teachers

- The Christian movement began in Jerusalem among the Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, spread into Judea and Samaria and throughout the world.
- The origins of the Church are found in Jesus' ministry i.e. in the whole of God's action in Jesus, in his ministry, in his death, in his resurrection, and in the gift of the Spirit to the disciples of Jesus.
- Jesus' resurrection and the disciples' experience of the Spirit of the risen Jesus are decisively important. The Risen Jesus commissions the disciples. Luke 24: 1-11; Luke 24: 36-49. They proclaim a Resurrection faith i.e. that in Jesus' resurrection the Reign of God had begun.
- Pentecost was a decisive moment in the beginning of the Church. It gave the first Christians the fire and passion to carry on the mission of Jesus through preaching and service.
- The early church was a community committed to living in the spirit and mission of the risen Jesus. It is a model of unity, worship, service, care of the poor and the ability to deal with conflict and diversity e.g. Acts 15.

Characteristics of the Church

- The word church translates the Greek **ekklesia/ecclesia**, which means an assembly of the people, a regularly summoned local council.
- We find a summary of the life of the early church in Acts 2: 42-47.
- **Baptism** became a standard practice symbolising initiation into the community, repentance for and forgiveness of sins.

- The baptised felt a **strong bond of unity and love**. They shared *Koinonia* community or communion, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the love and unity of the life of God. The voluntary sharing of goods was a part of this.
- **Communal prayer** of praise and thanksgiving was important, both in and away from the Temple. The Lukan prayers in the infancy narrative, the Magnificat and Benedictus are examples.
- The celebration of **the breaking of the Bread** or the Eucharist as a meal of remembrance and thanksgiving, and of fellowship and anticipation was characteristic of the early church.
- The **teaching** of apostles was a necessary dimension of community life and worship. This was Jewish teaching, the law and the prophets, understood in the light of Jesus' own teaching about the Law and the Scriptures understood now in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- **Service**, care for the poor, for widows etc was an important dimension of community life.
- The community was **diverse**. Belief in Jesus as Lord was fundamental to membership. Inclusion of others was an on-going struggle for the community. At certain periods and in different communities different practices occurred eg gentiles had to become Jews (be circumcised) in the earliest days to belong to the community, later gentiles were asked only to obey certain purity laws. A gradual separation from the Jewish Law and worship occurred.

Scripture

Acts 1:8 *The Ascension of Jesus*

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

Acts 2:1-9 *The coming of the Holy Spirit*

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

Acts 2:42-47 *Life among the believers*

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were gathered and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Galatians 3: 26-29 *All of us are one in Jesus Christ*

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 5: 22-23 *The fruit of the Spirit*

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

Major Assessment Task & Rubric – Years 7&8

The major assessment task comprises three parts.

Part 1.

What were the challenges faced by St. Paul on his journeys?

Your response should include a description of St. Paul's journeys and the challenges and support he experienced. Include a map/s that show his journeys.

Part 2.

Identify and explore the challenge faced by the churches of Galatia, ie listening to false prophets. What does St Paul say to the Galatians in response?

Part 3.

What is one issue in society today that St Paul would probably address? What would he say?

Research can be presented using one of a range of media.

It is expected that students and teachers will co-construct an assessment rubric for this task. Teachers are encouraged to assess skills and knowledge from other learning areas that may be included in this task.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity:

Watch the trailer for Paul, Apostle of Christ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyOqQZUDdO4>

Explain that this unit will focus on St Paul. Initially we will examine some earlier events from scripture that describe Jesus' instructions to his disciples, ie that they will need to continue the mission once he has left them.

Use **Appendix 1** to show students an outline of much of the content of the unit they are about to study.

The Ascension of Jesus

Students read Acts 1: 6-11

How would the disciples have been feeling at this time?

What does Jesus mean when he asks them to be his witnesses?

When will the Holy Spirit come upon them?

Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-13)

Youtube - **Day of Pentecost** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZdVJg1XJag>

Ask students "What are you thinking?"

Play "Receive the Power" (theme song from World Youth Day 2008)

Do you recognise any of the song lyrics? (see Acts 1:8)

Read Acts 2: 1-13 with the students

What song lyrics connect with the Pentecost story?

How were the disciples feeling? Why?

How did the disciples change? Consider their feelings and actions
Have you ever experienced the power of the Holy Spirit?

Students identify the main symbols in the story. Why are wind and fire powerful symbols? When have the students experienced wind and fire? Why would they be used to represent the Holy Spirit?

After the coming of the Holy Spirit what did the disciples do?

What were the reactions of the people?

Teacher links this back to Jesus' commissioning at his Ascension

Research where "Parthians, Medes, Elamites etc. came from. Together locate these on a current wall map.

What were the consequences of all these people hearing the disciples? (see also Acts 2: 41-42)

Why was the disciples' message attractive to hearers? (many people felt excluded in society at that time)

The First Christian Community (Acts 2: 43-47 & 4: 32-37)

Compare the two stories using a Venn diagram. What is common / what is in only one text?

What acts of service and community do the first followers engage in? How are these activities part of the Church today? What might it have been like to be part of the first Christian community? What is it like to be part of a Christian community today (eg parish or school)?

Saul/Paul

Being an early follower of Christ required great courage and faith. Christians were few in number and persecuted by the Jewish and Roman authorities; some were imprisoned or whipped or even killed (see Acts 7: 54-60 The Stoning of Stephen). One of the fiercest persecutors was a Pharisee named Saul (see Acts 8: 1-3).

Paul of Tarsus (a city in Cilicia, in what is now Turkey), was also known by the Jewish name of Saul. Paul, a name he may have had thanks to his Roman citizenship, was born early in the first century CE or late in the last century BCE in a Greek-speaking area of the Roman Empire. His parents came from Gischala, in Galilee.

Paul came from a family of artisans, and he learned the manual trade of weaver and tentmaker. He was a Roman citizen, and a Jew, and thus he was a member of a tolerated ethnicity in the Roman empire. The Jews were, however, heavily exploited by special tributes due to Romans by non-Romans.

As a young man, Paul/Saul was trained as a Pharisaic scribe, and his zeal for his community led him to be a thug. In Jerusalem between about 32/33 CE, he was present at the stoning murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen was one of a group of Hellenists, Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who chose to speak Greek rather than Aramaic. Hellenists were despised by both the Jewish community, and (eventually) the early Christian church as led by Peter.

After that, he personally led a pogrom against the Hellenists and other Christian sects, driving the Greek-speaking Christians out of Jerusalem and into the countryside. Some ended up in Antioch, where, after his conversion, Paul would defend them against the apostle Peter.

Students watch the following video clip on the conversion of Paul.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NOCTqfEHYI> (Paul's Conversion)

Ask students "What are you wondering about?"

Students read the conversion of Saul in Acts 9: 1 - 19. Why was Saul going to Damascus? What did Saul experience along the road? How might Saul have been feeling or thinking upon being made blind? Why was Ananias initially reluctant to look for Saul? Why does Ananias still go to Straight Street? (he has faith in God)

Provide students with a copy of the Caravaggio artwork *The Conversion of Paul* (**Appendix 2**)

Ask students to study the painting closely. What is your eye drawn to immediately as you look at this picture? What is happening in this artwork? How does this artwork compare to the text in Acts? What is different? What is the same? If you were painting the conversion of Saul, what would your artwork highlight and why?

Headline Activity: ***The Fork in the Road*** (**Appendix 3**)

Discuss the genre of Acts (historical narrative).

Organise students into groups of 4.

Each group reads the article.

Each group of students needs to:

- Find the relevant reference in the bible (e.g. Acts)
- Write their own newspaper article, including an interview with someone in the story.
- Ensure that you create a catchy and appropriate headline.
- Share each group's work

The Life of Paul

Everything about Saul has now changed including his name, person and mission. Paul believes his mission is to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ to the gentiles.

Students examine the timeline of Paul's life (**Appendix 4**)

Using a roll of brown paper (or newsprint) create a Graffiti Wall of Paul. It will be in 3 parts. Students will research (a) the three missionary journeys of Paul, (b) significant challenges Paul faced, and (c) some of the people he encountered and influenced. Students form 3 groups to undertake this task. (**Appendix 5** - details for each group; what finished wall may look like). Use maps, photos and drawings as well as text. When complete, students explain their work to the other groups.

Play Jeopardy Quiz. Students respond with a question to the following statement.

(For example

Statement: This figure features prominently in the early church.

Answer: Who is Paul?)

Statements:

Saul was on his way to this place when he experienced his conversion moment. (Where is Damascus?)

This civilisation was the dominant power at the time of Paul. (What is the Roman Empire?)

This is the birthplace of Saul. (Where is Tarsus?)

Paul belonged to this group of religious Jews. (Who is a Pharisee?)

The stories of Paul are found here in the New Testament. (What is the Book of Acts?)

The name given to people who aren't Jewish. (Who is a Gentile?)

This is another name for a letter. (What is an Epistle?)

These people are from Thessalonica or Athens. (Who are the Greeks?)

Paul wrote two letters to this place. (Where is Corinth? or Where is Thessalonica?)

Paul's Letters

How did Paul support the communities he had founded and spent time with on his journeys? (he wrote letters)

To whom did Paul write a letter? Find these places on your Graffiti Wall.

Paul wrote his letters in the typical style at that time of a Greek letter or epistle. Examine how to write a Pauline letter (four parts with reference to Ephesians – **Appendices 6&7**)

Students compose their own letter to a friend in the Pauline format. In the letter they encourage their friend to continue to build their faith in God and to contribute positively to their family, their friendship group and to society in general.

Galatians

Students will examine Paul's letter to the Galatians as a specific example of his missionary work. (**Appendix 8 - Teacher background to Galatians**)

Consider

1. *Who is the sender?* Paul
2. *Who is the receiver?* The Church of Galatia (Can you find it on a map?)
3. *How does Paul greet them?* "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".
4. *Where do we hear those words today?* In church/at Mass
5. *What is the main message of the letter?* The letter to the Galatians was written to Jews and Gentiles who had come to faith in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the Jewish believers who followed Paul insisted that the non-Jewish believers obey their Jewish laws. This caused tension in the church. Paul explained in his letter that no sinner saved through Jesus Christ stands under the Law of Moses any longer. All believers, no matter what their background, are justified by faith alone through Christ alone. And the faith believers have in Christ brings freedom from sin and death.
6. *How does the letter end?* – May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit".
7. *Where do we hear these words today?* - Responses during Mass

You might like to use one of Paul's greetings with your students each morning or afternoon. The students could repeat it after you. The students could choose a greeting to lead their prayers. Ask them to listen for the greeting at Mass.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Outline of unit content

Appendix 2: Caravaggio artwork The Conversion of Paul

Appendix 3: Newspaper Headline- The Fork in the Road

Appendix 4: Timeline of Paul's Life

Appendix 5: Graffiti Wall

Appendix 6: How to write a Pauline Letter

Appendix 7: Background notes on the Ephesians

Appendix 8: Background notes on the Galatians.