

Today is an "Earth Day" Sunday celebration and time to take a moment and remember our deep connection to the health of our planet - God's amazing creation.

It's also Happy Eastertide! We are in the 50 days of Easter (where each Sunday is a celebration of resurrection) before Pentecost and this is a great time to reflect on the early life of the Christian church. How did it emerge after Jesus' death and who helped it grow?

We'll spend 3 weeks studying the incredible life of the Apostle Paul.

- Week 1 - Saul to Paul: Change
- Week 2 - Paul's Letters & Travels: Commitment
- Week 3 - Paul & Silas in Jail: Compassion

WHO IS PAUL?:

Saul, also known as Paul has a story of change, second chances and calling. The new Christian church was starting to emerge right after Jesus died but under great hardship. Saul served as a Pharisee and a tentmaker by trade. He was from Tarsus which was a stop on a major trade route so he was exposed to many different lands and cultures. As a Pharisee, he did not like the new followers of Christ. He was mean to them and put them in jail. After his conversion experience, he changed his name to Paul and became one of Jesus most faithful apostles (messengers). He was given a second chance at a new way of living. He spent the rest of his life spreading the good news of Jesus over many lands and facing lots of trouble along the way. He never gave up and was true to his faith until the end.



SCRIPTURE:

"For you will be a witness for (Jesus) to tell everyone what you have seen and heard." —Acts 22:15

BIBLE BACKGROUND (Acts 22):

Saul was going to Damascus to continue his persecution of the followers of the Lord's Way (the new Christians). When he was almost to Damascus, a great light surrounded him. Saul fell to the ground. A voice said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" It was the risen Jesus confronting him. When Saul got up, he was blind and had to be led into the city. After 2 days, the Lord sent Ananias (a man of God) to heal Saul and baptize him. From then on Saul, or Paul as he became to be known, was a follower of Jesus. For the rest of his life, Paul traveled to many places and preached about the risen Jesus. Paul's story of conversion didn't come after a great sermon or a long relationship with Jesus. It was a personal and profound encounter with the risen Jesus on the side of a road that changed him forever. He became new by accepting God's love and devoted himself to spreading the teachings of Jesus.

ACTIVITIES:

Family Discussion:

1. In what ways can we help to care for our earth?
2. Have you ever changed the way you thought about something or someone?
3. Have you ever given someone a second chance? How did that feel?
4. Why do you think Paul was so dedicated to spreading Christianity after his conversion?

Spot the Change:

Have someone look at you for a minute, then leave the room and change 3 things about your appearance. Go back and see if that person can spot the changes.

Describe the difference between changing on the outside and changing on the inside?

Watch or Read "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" by Dr. Seuss:

How and why did the Grinch change how he felt about Christmas and Whoville? How is this story like Paul's story?

Monitor a Plant:

Find a plant in your home or in your yard and document how it changes over a day, a week and a month.

PRAYER:

Dear God,
Thank you for our beautiful earth. Help me to be a caretaker for your creation. Help me to understand, that like Paul, people can change and deserve second chances. Thank you for my second chances. Help me to be a change for good in the world. Thank you for loving me.
I love you.
Amen