

The Life of Apostle Paul

with Rick Steves

User's Guide
Summer 2004



Host Rick Steves takes viewers to modern-day Turkey and Greece where he recalls what happened to Paul in places like Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, and Corinth. Scenes of bustling city streets and the blue Aegean Sea are interspersed with shots of the ruins of buildings where Paul spoke and places in which early Christians worshiped.

“The Life of Apostle Paul” helps us appreciate the spirit of this man, Paul, whose personal experience of the Risen Christ turned his life around. From persecuting members of the Jesus movement, Paul becomes the movement’s primary spokesperson and the one most responsible for spreading the Good News of God’s amazing grace and our everlasting life in Jesus Christ. Today, Paul’s written words continue to inspire both committed Christians and those who are looking for God’s presence in their lives and the world.

The video may be used on its own in an adult forum, as one part of a new members’ class, or in conjunction with a Bible study of the New Testament.



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Discussion Starters

The Life of Apostle Paul with Rick Steves

1. Host Rick Steves points out that Paul and his letters are of immense importance, especially to St. Augustine and Martin Luther. Both Augustine and Luther follow Paul in their insistence on a personal relationship with and responsibility to God through Jesus Christ.

- In which ways is your faith grounded in a personal relationship with God?
- How does your understanding of being a Christian mirror what Paul says about our personal responsibility to God?

2. While we often think of Christ's blinding call to Paul to spread the gospel across the world, we often forget about God's call to so many others to spread the gospel in their own communities. As Craig Koester suggests, the story of Paul's call is just as much the story of Ananias'—a point we often forget. While Paul is called to take the gospel "to the nations," Ananias is called to take it "across town... to someone he considered his enemy."

- In your congregation, how are you sharing the good news? Globally? Locally?

3. Paul was kicked out of Philippi and Ephesus for economic reasons: what he did (healed the young woman who foretold the future) and what he preached (there is but one God and that God is not enshrined in a statue) threatened the livelihoods of important people. These people were able to turn the crowd against Paul and get him either arrested or removed from their cities, thus protecting their economic interests.

- Can you think of situations today on a global, national, local, or congregational level where economic interest conflicts with the gospel message?
- In our own households, do we always put the gospel before our economic well being or are we more like the merchants of Philippi and Ephesus?

- What factors in our culture emphasize the importance of security and economic well being?

- What biblical passages or stories can you think of that challenge the primary importance of such things?

4. When we think of the role of women in Paul's time, we don't always imagine them as powerful figures. However, both Susan Briehl and Craig Koester point out that the women Paul worked with were strong, capable, and "anything but silent." Consider the following women and the roles they played in the formation of the early Christian church.

Lydia (Acts 16:13-15; 40) was Paul's first convert on the European continent and was wealthy enough to provide housing for Paul, his fellow travelers, and other believers in Philippi.

Tabitha (Dorcas) (Acts 9:36-43), from Joppa, is called a disciple and is noted for piety and good works. Peter restores her to life and this miracle causes many people to believe in Jesus Christ.

Priscilla (Acts 18), along with her husband Aquila, provides Paul employment as a tent-maker in Corinth, accompanies Paul on his second trip to Ephesus, and instructs Apollo in the "Way of the Lord."

- Compare the above passages with what we read in 1 Corinthians 14:32-35: "Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says..."

- What might account for this statement in Paul's letter to the people of Corinth?

- How do we reconcile this statement with our own understanding of women's roles in ELCA congregations and synods and the Church, the body of Christ, as a whole?



RESOURCES for “The Life of Apostle Paul with Rick Steves”

While there are hundreds of books and other resources on Paul, here are three that relate directly to this video and to our life together in this church.

Craig Koester’s Web site provides more details about Paul and the places he lived. Go to www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Paul/Main.htm

Walter Wangerin Jr.’s book, *Paul: A Novel*, is a fictionalized account of Paul’s life. Available from ZondervanPublishingHouse (ISBN 0-310-21892-6) \$14.99

“The Life of Apostle Paul” does not address the passages of Paul’s letters that address homosexual behavior. For an in-depth, scholarly discussion of these verses go to www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/background.html

Also useful is “Journey Together Faithfully, Part Two: Homosexuality and the Church.” This study guide is available on the Web at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/study02.html Or call 800.328.4648 to order print copies. (ISBN 6-0001-6848-9) \$1.50 each, plus shipping

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