

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 01

**Narrator:** Demetrius the Silversmith

**Primary Scriptures:** Acts 17:1-8, 19

**Story Summary:** Paul's stay in Thessalonica and Ephesus; the effects of Christianity

**Location:** Roman Empire; Galatia, Macedonia, Greece

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey  
AD 50-67 Time period of when Paul wrote his letters in the New Testament

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Acts 17:6; 19:26-27

Most modern Christians probably think the people of the Roman Empire were thrilled to have Christianity come to them. After all, the Gospel means "good news." That was true for many people, but for many others the Gospel was bad news. Jesus aptly described what Christianity would do when He said, "Don't think that I've come to bring peace on earth; I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, the daughter against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And, a man's foes shall be those in his own household."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout virtually all the Empire, the historical purpose of religion and gods was to provide protection and prosperity. In the time of Jesus, emperor worship had become more common; the emperor became the religious entity to provide that protection and prosperity. Christianity completely up-ended the way people behaved and believed, encouraging Christians to act against the social norms, which often had an effect on family stability, community behavior, and economic circumstances.

Acts 19 is the beginning of Paul's Third Missionary Journey. He arrived in Ephesus, baptized twelve new believers, taught about Jesus in the synagogue for three months, and taught for two years in the hall of Tyrannus. The results were astounding. Everyone in the province of Asia heard the Gospel, extraordinary miracles were done through Paul, and many people were converted to Christianity.

The effects of Paul's teachings were so extraordinary that a vast number of people quit worshipping the main local god, dramatically affecting the local economy as incomes dropped for workers who supported the local temple and served the worshipers. On an economic basis, the coming of Christianity was not good news to them and their families; it was horrible news. Keep that point of view in mind as you read the letters Paul wrote.

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<sup>1</sup> Mat. 10:34-36

### Discussion Questions:

1. Have you previously perceived that Romans and Greeks typically were thrilled when Paul introduced them to the Good News? Are you thrilled when people introduce new religious ideas to you? How do you react when Christians pose new ideas about Christianity to you that don't automatically fit your entrenched beliefs and perceptions?
2. Assuming you are a Christian, why have you stayed a Christian instead of converting to another major religion such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam? Why do adherents to those religions stay with them instead of converting to Christianity?
3. Early Christians were known as atheists because they did not believe in Roman gods or the gods of local communities. How are modern Christians perceived by non-Christians? Why are Christians perceived that way? Is this a good thing?
4. In the modern world, companies use brand names and images to convince consumers about issues of quality, price, social status, and other purchasing criteria. How might Christians do the same thing? Should Christians take a page out of the advertising norms in sharing the Good News?
5. Has being a Christian ever helped or hurt you (or someone you know) economically? Have you ever tried to take advantage of it helping you economically?

4. By how churches are named, denominations portray themselves, slogans are used, and how they portray themselves in public.

### Application Questions:

1. How can you "brand" yourself so that your name becomes shorthand for being an ambassador for Jesus?
2. Many people feel threatened when Christians try to talk with them about Christianity. How can you help people feel less threatened when you discuss your faith?
3. Name some aspects of living in your nation or community that pressure you to behave in a way contrary to how Christians should behave. How can you keep from bowing to those pressures?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. In your school, are Christians admired or criticized? How can you personally improve the reputation that Christians have?
2. What are some of the "idols" that kids at your school worship? How do they worship them? Have you ever fallen prey to temptation to worship these "idols"? How can you guard yourself against that temptation?
3. Do you expect Christians will endure more criticism in future years by the media and educators? How will you deal with it if that happens?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 02

**Narrator:** Eunice

**Primary Scriptures:** Galatians 1-2

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia

**Location:** Roman Empire; Galatia

**Time:** AD 30           Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48                Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50                Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey; approximate  
                               time of the writing of *Galatians*.

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Galatians 1:4, 9; 2:20-21

This episode assumes Galatians was written in about 50 AD, though many scholars believe it was written a few years later. The difference in the date might have some impact on how certain things in the letter are interpreted.

For most of its first decade of existence, Christianity was essentially a sect of Judaism. Virtually all Christians were Jewish and continued to follow the laws of Moses as best they could. As non-Jews became Christians, many of the Jewish Christians insisted that they follow the laws of Moses, too, including circumcision for the men; the Council of Jerusalem in about 49-50 AD concluded that non-Jewish Christians did not have to follow the laws of Moses. On his Second Missionary Journey, Paul took a letter from the council showing their conclusion.

These Jewish Christians, also called "Judaizers," chose not to go quietly. Some of them continued to push the subject in totality, while others chose to teach other precepts in addition to the Gospel that Paul taught. False teachers, including the Judaizers, would plague Paul for his entire ministry. They not only taught things in opposition to the Gospel, but they also continually challenged Paul's authority to determine what messages should be taught. Non-Jewish Christians were new believers, the New Testament had not yet been written, and the non-Jews had little knowledge of the Old Testament, so many of Paul's letters contain much on Paul's defense of his authority as an apostle, condemnation for those who are in opposition to him, and statements concerning the nature of the Gospel.

*Galatians* is written to the churches in Galatia, most of which Paul and Barnabas started on their First Missionary Journey. It must have been terribly disappointing to Paul that these churches questioned his authority and teachings. Most of the first two chapters of Galatians are spent defending and establishing his authority and teachings. The famous verses in Galatians 2:19-21 work as a transition to other chapters which contain some of Paul's most insightful teachings.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Acts 15 is an account of the Council of Jerusalem. Summarize the outcome of that meeting.
  2. How did the people in Galatia differ from the people in Jerusalem?
  3. What churches in Galatia did Paul establish on his First Missionary Journey? How well did he know the people there?
  4. In the first two chapters of *Galatians*, Paul emphasizes the validity of his teachings and of his apostleship. Why does he do so?
  5. Paul says that Titus was not required to be circumcised. Yet, Paul later circumcises Timothy (Acts 16:3). Why the difference?
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1. Non-Jewish Christians did not have to follow the laws of Moses and the Jewish traditions. 2. The people in Jerusalem were Jewish, knew the Old Testament, and were used to being God's people. The people in Galatia were typically non-Jewish, used to worshiping Roman and local gods, and accustomed to Roman ways. 3. Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. He probably spent only a few weeks at those places, but he surely made some good friends while there. However, when Paul's opponents came to teach differently, it must have been hard for the people to know who to believe. 4. False teachers had come to Galatia teaching things different than Paul had taught. Paul was forced to convince them that they should listen to him, not to the false teachers. It is possible that they didn't understand why being an apostle was that important. 5. Timothy had a Jewish mother and would qualify to teach in the synagogues if he was circumcised. He did it to take advantage of an opportunity to evangelize, not in order to become a Christian.

### Application Questions:

1. What can you do to become someone who is authoritative in what you say about Jesus?
2. Which is more important to you...what the Bible says about something or what popular opinion says? What sources do you use to determine what the Bible says? Who do you trust to help you learn about the Bible?
3. Are there teachings in the New Testament that you feel are no longer valid? Why do you feel that way? Does that feeling change the way you think about the Bible?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Who do you trust to help you determine what teachings are in the Bible?
2. Is every teaching in the New Testament still valid, or does the New Testament teach things that are no longer valid in modern society?
3. On virtually any topic, the Internet will have articles that conflict in their conclusions. How do you know which articles are useful to learn from and which should be ignored?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 03

**Narrator:** Lois

**Primary Scriptures:** Galatians 3-6

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia

**Location:** Roman Empire; Galatia

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey; approximate time of the writing of *Galatians*.

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Galatians 3:3, 11, 26-28; 4:6-8; 5:1, 8, 14, 16, 22-25; 6:2-3, 7, 10

On their First Missionary Journey, Paul and Barnabas established churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, towns located in the Roman province of Galatia, in central Asia Minor. Paul probably had these churches in mind when he wrote *Galatians*.

Timothy, Eunice, and Lois were from Lystra. It is not absolutely clear if Paul and Barnabas met them on the First Missionary Journey, but this is likely. It is possibly from them that Paul learned Judaizers were negatively influencing those early churches.

Assuming *Galatians* is the first of Paul's letters, then Galatians 3 becomes his first written foray into a topic that will become a major theme for him: the righteous live by faith, not by following the Laws of Moses. Moving forward, he concludes that those who believe in Christ are adopted children of God. He also makes a statement that will resound through the centuries: among those who believe in Christ, there is to be no distinction due to ethnicity, gender, or any other human-based distinction. Christians are to be completely unified.

In Galatians 4, Paul lays out his case that those who follow Christ have freedom, and those who don't are enslaved. In this passage, Paul uses a word that may sound strange to modern ears, "zealous." In modern use, it tends to mean enthusiastic and diligent, but Paul intended it to mean entirely devoted and very passionate. The first use of the word in the Bible is when Phinehas was so devoted to God that he drove a spear through a Jewish man and into a Midianite woman who were committing adultery.<sup>1</sup> As a zealous person himself, Paul notes the importance of being zealous...for the right things.

Chapters 5 and 6 contain some of the most important teachings about the Holy Spirit that are in the New Testament, as well as some of the most important teachings about living as a Christian. In one of the most recognized phrases of his teachings, Paul describes actions and consequences in a few simple words: "You reap what you sow."

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 24:11

### Discussion Questions:

1. Paul opens Ephesians 3 by describing the Galatians as being foolish and easily deceived by false teachers. How are some ways that modern Christians are foolish and easily deceived?
  2. One of Paul's themes is based on a phrase from Habakkuk 2:4. The New International Version shows that the Hebrew word in that verse can be translated as "faith" or "faithfulness." What is the difference in those two words in modern use? How do you understand "the righteous shall live by faithfulness" instead of "the righteous shall live by faith"?
  3. Galatians 4:7 says that Christians are sons of God. Why do you think Paul used the word "sons" instead of "children" in this context?
  4. Galatians 5:1 says not to submit to the yoke of slavery. What kind of slavery was he talking about?
  5. Discuss Galatians 6:7 and how it applies to your society.
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1. "faithfulness" possibly implies more of doing something in response to faith, while "faith" possibly implies more of intellectual assent. 3. In this context, he was talking about heirs, which were typically sons. 4. Spiritual slavery to following the law.

### Application Questions:

1. Name a time in your life when you reaped what you sowed in a negative sense, and another time in a positive sense.
2. Consider Galatians 5:17-23. Do you consider the things listed there as complete lists, or simple examples? If you read Galatians 5:22-23 as a partial listing, what other attributes might you add to the ones in those verses?
3. Galatians 6:9 says not to grow weary of doing good. Have you ever grown weary of doing good to the point you quit doing it?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Think of something that happened to you in the past year when you reaped what you had previously sown. How much time delay was there between the sowing and the reaping? Did that time delay cause you to believe you might avoid the consequences of doing something? If there is a long delay, or you question whether you will ever receive a penalty, do you tend to misbehave more than if the consequences are sure and immediate?
2. Galatians 5:14 says that the whole law is summed up by, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Modern society is trending toward a message of loving oneself while trying not to harm your neighbor. What is the difference between those two descriptions of life?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 04

**Narrator:** Silas

**Primary Scriptures:** First Thessalonians

**Story Summary:** Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica

**Location:** Roman Empire; Macedonia, Thessalonica

**Time:** AD 30            Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48            Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50            Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 51            Writing of *First* and *Second Thessalonians*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1 Thess. 1:4; 4:3-4, 7, 11-12, 15-17; 5:16-19

The church at Thessalonica was established on the Second Missionary Journey by Paul and Silas. It is possible Timothy was with them on that trip while they were at Thessalonica, which would explain why all three of them are named as senders of the letter known as *First Thessalonians*, although it is likely that Paul authored most of it.

This is the first of Paul's letters written to a church in Macedonia or Greece, and possibly the first one written to a church consisting mostly of non-Jews. Paul also personally knew most of the people in the church, and was familiar with their customs.

The first chapter is full of compliments and encouragement for the members of this young church, which has only existed for two or three years. The second chapter is a reminder of the way Paul lived faultlessly among them, and how he taught them the true gospel. By the end of the second chapter, you can imagine the Thessalonians thought they were truly "simpatico" with Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

In the third chapter, Paul starts revealing that they had previously sent Timothy back to the Thessalonians for two reasons: to encourage them and to find out how they were holding up against persecution and other temptations. He assures them that Timothy brought back a very good report from that trip. However, Paul also hints that there are still aspects of their faith lacking, and he drops a tidbit of information that Jesus will come back with his holy ones.

Chapter Four gives instructions on how to live holy lives. Some of these sound silly to modern ears because they seem so obvious, but many of the Thessalonians grew up with such things as drunkenness and sexual immorality considered normal, acceptable behavior. Paul was trying to change their standards.

Much of the rest of this letter discusses future events of the second coming of Jesus. This subject seems to have so captivated them that many had quit working in anticipation of the Lord returning quickly. Paul tries to inform them about the subject so they will behave as they should. Since he wrote to them again, we can conclude his results were spotty.

### Discussion Questions:

1. The Christians in Thessalonica were previously like the rest of the Greeks/Macedonians and Romans in their propensity toward drunkenness and sexual excesses. How do you think they liked Paul's insistence on his new definition of good behavior (1 Tim. 4:3-5)? Do you think the men or women liked the new message better?
  2. What does 1 Thess. 3:1-2 indicate about Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians?
  3. In 1 Thess. 5:2, why did Paul remind them that the date of the coming of the Lord could not be predicted? What is the difference in believing the Lord will come back someday versus the Lord will come back very soon?
  4. How long had the Thessalonian church existed when Paul wrote this letter? Considering this, do you think they were doing well in their pursuit of Christian living?
2. Paul knew the Thessalonians personally, and deeply cared that they not succumb to the false teachers or to immorality. The Thessalonians knew Timothy well, so he was the best weapon Paul had. 3. It seems that some of the Thessalonians expected Christ to come soon, so they had quit working at their jobs, and may have quit being quite so controlled in their other behaviors. 4. Two or three years; yes.

### Application Questions:

1. 1 Thess. 5:16-17 says to rejoice always and pray without ceasing. In the modern world, is it possible to do those things? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. 1 Thess. 5:22 says to abstain from every type of evil, and 1 Thess. 4:3 says to abstain from sexual immorality. Do you like abiding by sweeping statements like those, or would you prefer to have lists of evil types of behavior to avoid? Are sweeping statements or lists more restrictive?
3. 1 Thess. 4:13-18 says the Lord will come, and that it is an encouraging message that He will do so. Since He has not come back yet, do you believe He will or that this message is somehow no longer valid? What does it mean that Jesus will come?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. What does it mean to abstain from sexual immorality? Is that message still valid now that there are ways to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases?
2. How does 1 Thess. 4:11-12 apply to you?
3. 1 Thess. 5:18 says it is the will of God that you give thanks in all circumstances. What would that look like in your life? Is that even possible for you to do?
4. 1 Thess. 4:22 says to abstain from every type of evil. Do you believe that there is evil in the world? How has society's definition of evil changed in the last 100 years? Do you think God's definition of evil changes with time?



**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 05

**Narrator:** Jason

**Primary Scriptures:** Second Thessalonians

**Story Summary:** Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica

**Location:** Roman Empire; Macedonia, Thessalonica

**Time:** AD 30            Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48            Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50            Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 51            Writing of *First* and *Second Thessalonians*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 3:1, 6, 10, 13

This letter was probably written shortly after *First Thessalonians*. The church at Thessalonica seemed to be doing pretty well except for one thing, manifested in two ways: they were so focused on the second coming of Christ that they weren't maturing in other areas and were not taking care of their daily business.

It may be a little dramatic to say it this way, but in this letter, Paul is setting the stage for an "us versus them" mentality, where "us" are the believing Christians (especially the persevering true believers like the Thessalonians) and "them" are all others. Developing this type of mentality is a proven way for making people commit to a cause and keeping them committed. It is a simple way to develop distinguishing characteristics.

Unbelievers will be paid back trouble for the trouble they have caused, will be punished with everlasting destruction and kept from the presence of the Lord. This will happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven. Unbelievers are those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus. (1:6-9)

Believers are those who endure through suffering. God will give them relief, and will be glorified through their lives. (1:5-12)

Paul reassures the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord has not yet occurred, and it will not occur until certain things happened. Paul reminds them he had told them about these things before. These things may sound mysterious and incomprehensible to modern people because we do not know what he had previously told them in person. Paul must have thought this was sufficient information for them, though, so he moves on to other matters.

Among other things, he reminds the Thessalonians they must lead holy lives while they wait for the Day of the Lord. They must work to take care of themselves and set a good example for non-Christians, so that through their attractive lives they may bring others into the kingdom of God. That message was a big key to the growth of the church for the next two hundred years, and continues to be a good message today.

### Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 indicates God will punish those who are troubling the Thessalonians. Who was he talking about, and how were they troubling the Thessalonians?
2. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 says God will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel. Are these the same people he is talking about in the previous two verses, or is Paul talking about other people?
3. Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. Is it more important that we fulfill our purposes so we feel satisfaction and fulfillment or that Jesus is glorified through us? Can those two aspects be in harmony with one another?
4. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 talks of the man of lawlessness and the circumstances around the coming of Christ. Is this a subject that seems important to modern Christians? When you read these verses, how do they make you feel?
5. Paul ends the letter by saying he is adding his own handwriting. What does that imply?
  1. That the rest of the letter was in the handwriting of a scribe since Paul dictated the letter to him.

### Application Questions:

1. 2 Thess. 2:9 says the coming of the Man of Lawlessness will be displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. How can you keep from being tricked by these? Does 2 Thess. 2:10-12 give you some things to work on now? What does it mean to love the truth?
2. Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians. Name ten different people you thank God for. Are you willing to do so now? How could you make this a regular habit?
3. Paul tells the Thessalonians in 2 Thess. 2:15 to stand firm and hold on to the teachings passed on to them. Do you know enough about the things you have been taught to hold firm to them? How can you learn more about important Biblical truths?
4. Paul warns against idleness. What do you think about when you are idle? What useful things could you do instead of being idle? What is the difference in resting and idleness? Is it possible for activity to be idleness?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. If you believe in the power of prayer, you understand the benefit of having many people praying on your behalf. Are you willing to ask someone to pray for you? You probably know somebody who needs your prayers. Will you pray for them now?
2. Paul warns the Thessalonians against idleness. What does idleness look like in your life? Can you be idle while playing video games or being on social media?
3. One of the scariest passages in the Bible is 2 Thess. 2:1-11. How can you protect yourself about being deceived by evil people?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 06

**Narrator:** Priscilla and Aquila

**Primary Scriptures:** First Corinthians 1-7

**Story Summary:** Paul's first New Testament letter to the church in Corinth

**Location:** Roman Empire; Greece, Corinth

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 56 Paul writes *1 Corinthians*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 1:7, 18, 25; 2:2-4, 7; 3:12-13, 16; 4:16; 6:9-10, 19

Paul probably wrote at least four letters to the church at Corinth. Two of them are included in the New Testament; there are no known copies of the others. First Corinthians 5:9-11 indicates that Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians previous to *First Corinthians*.

Paul arrived by himself in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey. He made acquaintances with Priscilla and Aquila and began working with them; Silas and Timothy joined them later. Together, they established the church in Corinth. Paul stayed in Corinth for about a year and a half. There is no doubt he had strong relationships with the people and knew them individually.

*First Corinthians* was written about three or four years after Paul left Corinth, toward the end of the Third Missionary Journey. The letter is addressed from Paul and Sosthenes, a former resident of Corinth who was previously the leader of its synagogue.

By the time of the letter, the church at Corinth had become a disaster, forcing Paul to address a long list of problems. The church was divided over who they counted as their leader; rather than following Christ, some of them wanted to follow Paul, Apollos, or Peter. Paul had to convince them that Christ is the head of the church, and all others are followers who use their gifts to serve the Lord.

Once again, Paul found it necessary to prove his apostleship and show why he had the authority to teach and be followed. Apparently, the Corinthians were either being influenced by false teachers or were being so prideful they simply did whatever they wanted.

The Corinthians chose to overlook a case of shameful incest among their members. A man was sleeping with his stepmother, and that church did not mourn about it. In fact, the church members were proud of it. Paul insisted that they put the man out of their fellowship. Paul made it clear that they must not even associate with a church member who is sexually immoral, greedy, an idol worshiper, slanderer, or drunkard. As evidenced by this letter, the Corinthians had a lot to learn about living as Christians.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Paul lived about a year and a half in Corinth as he established the church there. How did his knowledge of the people there help him in addressing their problems? Do you think he knew things about them that they did not think he knew?
  2. How did Priscilla and Aquila help Paul as he dealt with the Corinthian Christians?
  3. How have you seen 1 Corinthians 1:18 exhibited in your dealings with other people?
  4. Based on 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5, what might other people have been preaching to the Corinthians?
  5. Do you think 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is speaking about current earthly things, future spiritual things, or both?
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1. That they were wiser or had more knowledge than Paul. That they were getting their message heard by being persuasive, not by being truthful. That Jesus was not a man or that he did not rise from the dead.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul initially worked as a tentmaker while he established the church in Corinth. Do you think this is a good or bad model for missionaries to use? Why? Does your line of reasoning also apply to American pastors?
2. Paul often shows his desire that churches are unified and have no divisions in them. What can you personally do to keep divisiveness out of your church? What can you do to help it be more unified?
3. In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him. Are you comfortable asking people to imitate your spiritual life? What could you change to make yourself more of a model for others to follow?
4. 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 talk about church discipline and behavior among Christians. Do you think Paul's words in those two chapters are still applicable today?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. It is easy to become morally influenced by teachers and professors who seem to be intellectually brilliant. Read 1 Corinthians 2:5 and 2:14 and think about how morally influential your teachers should be. Is it a good idea for celebrities, athletes, or social media stars to influence your thinking?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12. Many young people want to be free from being told what to do. How does this verse help you avoid being mastered by anything not of God?
3. What can you do to get along better with other Christians? Are you willing to do that?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 07

**Narrator:** Sosthenes

**Primary Scriptures:** First Corinthians 8-16

**Story Summary:** Paul's first New Testament letter to the church in Corinth

**Location:** Roman Empire; Greece, Corinth

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 56 Paul writes *1 Corinthians*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 8:3, 13; 9:22-23; 10:13-14, 23-24, 31; 11:1, 24-26; 12:3, 11; 13:1-13; 14:40; 15:3-8, 17-18

In the second half of *First Corinthians*, Paul goes into detail about how a unified church and its members should behave. The Corinthians' bad behavior provided a backdrop for Paul's teachings that would be very valuable for churches of all time. We must have humility and remember that reading this letter is a bit like listening to one side of a phone conversation: Paul may be addressing questions and situations we do not fully understand.

For instance, Paul starts 1 Corinthians 8 by addressing food sacrificed to idols. While few people face this situation today, the self-sacrificing, self-disciplined principles Paul lays out are invaluable to modern Christians who live in a self-centered, I-want-my-way society. Paul goes on to show how he personally uses those same principles, the principles that help give Christians freedom and liberty.

Much of Paul's instructions about spiritual gifts, behavior in worship gatherings, communion, and orderly worship are found nowhere else in the Bible, so modern Christians benefit by the Corinthians' need for detailed instruction. On the other hand, passages such as 1 Corinthians 11, 12 and 14 are some of the most challenging in the Bible when applying them to modern life.

1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. Paul moves from the intricacies of right behavior to the overwhelming, sublime power of love. Throughout his letters, Paul stresses the importance of faith. The early church was motivated by hope. Yet Paul writes, "and these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Paul addresses the subject of resurrection in chapter 15, another subject treated in more detail in this letter than anywhere else in the Bible. Paul's conclusion: since Jesus has victory over death, we should praise and thank God.

### Discussion Questions:

1. 1 Corinthians 8 is specifically about food sacrificed to idols. In what ways can the principles of that chapter be applied to modern life?
2. Discuss some ways you have seen 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 happen.
3. Discuss different ways of interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. What principles of that passage can be applied by modern men and women?
4. How is 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 applicable in your church and in your life? Which “body part” are you in your church? When you don’t attend church services, how does your church have to overcome your absence?
5. Some modern people have a hard time believing in the resurrection. If there were more than 500 witnesses of his resurrection, should that help them believe it? (1 Corinthians 15:6) How important is it for Christians to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? (1 Corinthians 15:17)

### Application Questions:

1. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul says that knowledge puffs up while love builds up. How can you apply those words of wisdom to your life? How do you know how much time to spend studying the Bible versus the time spent doing good deeds?
2. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, Paul reveals one of his secrets about how to behave around different types of peoples and cultures. How can you apply this to your life?
3. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul says God provides ways “out so that you can endure” temptation. Does that mean God always gives a way to quit being tempted or a way to endure temptation? Are you good at enduring temptation?
4. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul urges the Corinthians to follow his example, as he follows the example of Christ. Are you willing to advise others to follow your example in all things? If not, what would you need to change in order to do so?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Do you think 1 Corinthians 11:14 is applicable to modern life or was it applicable only to the time of Paul? What principle are applicable from modern life in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16?
2. 1 Corinthians 13 is often called the Love Chapter. Does its description of love match up with the description you see portrayed in popular culture? Does it describe some of the ways you want to be loved?
3. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says Jesus appeared to more than 500 people after his resurrection. Does that piece of information affect your belief in Jesus being raised from the dead?
4. How do you fulfill 1 Corinthians 16:14?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 08

**Narrator:** Titus

**Primary Scriptures:** Second Corinthians

**Story Summary:** Paul's second New Testament letter to the church in Corinth

**Location:** Roman Empire; Greece, Corinth

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 56 Paul writes *1 Corinthians*, *2 Corinthians*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 2 Corinthians 2:14; 4:16-18; 5:10, 17, 20-21; 6:14; 9:6-7; 10:4-5; 12:9

In *Second Corinthians*, Paul seemingly jumps from topic to topic, but there are three main themes. First, Paul defends his apostleship and his authority. In this letter, Paul also makes a passionate plea for the Corinthians to commit to their relationship with him. Their relationship was strained by his previous letters criticizing their behavior, and possibly by a previous visit that didn't go well.

Next, Paul calls on them to be generous, especially in their giving toward the big relief fund Paul is raising for the Jerusalem church. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul lays out many valuable principles about giving, especially giving to other churches and Christians in need.

Third, much of the letter is about reconciliation, especially in two areas: among the Corinthians themselves, and between God and mankind. *First Corinthians* exposed many of the problems of the Corinthian church. Although some of those were corrected by the time of *Second Corinthians*, they still had a list of improvements they needed to make.

In 2 Corinthians 4-5, Paul gives tantalizing information about the eternal rewards of being faithful to God. In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, he makes it clear that eternal rewards are far more valuable and important than the rewards of this world, that heavenly homes are eternal.

If you go to Corinth today, there is a famous platform in the middle of the city. It is known as the *Bema*, or judgment seat. It was where official proclamations were made, or where citizens stood to be judged by officials. Several of these Bema seats are mentioned in the Bible: when Pilate tried Jesus in Jerusalem; when Agrippa made a speech before it in Caesarea before being struck down with worms and where Paul was tried before Festus; and this one in Corinth where Paul was tried before Gallio. This is possibly what Paul had in mind when he cautioned the Corinthians: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10)

### Discussion Questions:

1. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-9, Paul goes into great detail about the trials he is facing. Why did he do that? Would 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 have been enough to change his discouraging news to encouraging news?
2. 2 Corinthians 4:15 is another verse showing that the overall purpose of the gospel is that God is glorified. Thanksgiving is one action that glorifies. What are some other ways you can live out this gospel purpose of glorification?
3. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says all will appear before Christ and be judged for the good and bad things they did. How does that verse fit with your thoughts on forgiveness, grace, and salvation?
4. What is the “grace of giving” in which Paul encourages the Corinthians to excel? If it is generosity, how can you excel in being generous?
5. How big of a problem is false teaching based on 2 Corinthians 10-11? Do you think Paul had difficulty convincing the Corinthians they should believe him instead of other teachers who disagreed with him?

### Application Questions:

1. According to 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, the Corinthians themselves were representing Paul and Christ, letters read by everybody. Do you feel like you are a letter from Christ and your church leaders that is read by everybody? Are you pleased with the message that your life sends to those who read your “letter”?
2. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 are well-known verses that explain a way Paul stayed faithful through the years. In those verses, what is Paul’s antidote to suffering? What does Paul mean by unseen things?
3. Does 2 Corinthians 6:14 apply to your business relationships? Friendships? Family relationships? How does that verse fit with your obligation to share the Gospel with unbelievers?
4. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says Satan masquerades as an angel of light. How can you determine whether the things you believe are from God and not from Satan?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says the god of this world (Satan) blinds the minds of unbelievers so they cannot understand the gospel. Does this explain why you can read the Bible and believe it, while your friends are not able to understand it or believe it? Are you willing to pray that God opens the eyes of your friends so they can believe?
2. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says we are ambassadors of Christ. What are the responsibilities of an ambassador of the United States? What aspects of those responsibilities does an ambassador of Christ share?
3. 2 Corinthians 12:7 says Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him from being conceited. The Lord told him the thorn was to show God’s power is made perfect in weakness. What weaknesses do you have that God can use to demonstrate his power?



**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 09

**Narrator:** Tertius

**Primary Scriptures:** Romans 1-8

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Rome

**Location:** Roman Empire; Italy; Rome

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
AD 57 Paul writes *Romans* while in Corinth

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Romans 1:16-17, 32; 3:20, 22-23; 5:6, 16, 23; 7:19-20; 8:15-17, 26-27, 28-30, 31, 37-39

There are no exact population figures for the city of Rome in 57 AD, but there were certainly several hundred thousand people living there, and maybe as many as one million. Based on Romans 1:7 and Romans 16, we can surmise there were several house churches in Rome at the time Paul wrote *Romans*.

One of the striking things about *Romans* is that, unlike many of Paul's other letters, it does not address false teaching nor specific problems of a church. This could be due to the fact that Rome's churches had strong leaders such as Priscilla and Aquila.

Though we don't have exact dates, you can think of *Romans* as being Paul's celebration of 25 years of being a Christian. He knows exactly what he believes and has had plenty of practice presenting his beliefs...and defending them.

Many in Paul's audience were non-Jews with little background in the Old Testament. These Gentiles had a background of idolatry and licentious living and needed to understand the heritage of the Jews, which included following the law and the promises of God. The Jews had tried to attain righteousness through following the law, but that didn't work.

Paul wanted to explain how both the Jews and Gentiles had become part of the true Israel, people of God, who attained righteousness through faith. Paul begins the letter by explaining that God is righteous but all humans are unrighteous. God provides a way for people to become righteous through Jesus, if it is received by faith. People are either slaves to sin or to righteousness.

Romans 8 is a powerful testimony to the power of a Spirit-empowered life, and the future glory that believers will obtain. Perhaps the most comforting verse in the New Testament is found in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

### Discussion Questions:

1. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul clearly states his beliefs about what kinds of behavior are sinful and evil. Modern society disagrees with much of what Paul says. Do you think Paul's beliefs are still valid or do you have reasons why they are not?
2. Romans 4:3 refers to Genesis 15:6 and 15:22, which say that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. How did Abraham demonstrate his belief? How do you demonstrate your belief in God?
3. Romans 4:17 says God calls into being things that were not. What kinds of things can God call into being that didn't exist before? Does God still do this?
4. According to Romans 6:22-23, what are some beneficial results of being set free from sin? Can you be released from sin by just trying harder? How can you be set free?
5. Read Romans 8:28. Do you tend to stop reading that thought before its finish. How do verses 29 and 30 affect your understanding of verse 28?
  1. According to Genesis 1, he called virtually everything into being that didn't exist before. He can also call into being things like: love, respect, glory. 4. Holiness, eternal life. You cannot free yourself, it can only be done by God.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul opens this letter by calling himself a "servant" of Christ Jesus. The word "servant" can also be translated as "slave". When you think about your relationship with Jesus, do you think in terms of being His servant? Do you think your relationship is voluntary, or have you made a commitment so strong that it is a complete obligation? Does a committed relationship feel odd in a society that prizes independence?
2. Romans 7:15-24 are some critical verses that explain why Christians sometimes behave irrationally. The power of evil is clearly very strong. How do you quit behaving in ways you don't want and begin behaving in ways you do?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Paul says that some people not only participate in evil, but also approve of those who do evil. Are there times when you don't do evil things but approve of those who do them? Do you show approval of the evil behavior of some celebrities if you support their products and services?
2. Romans 6:12 says not to let sin reign over your body so you obey its evil desires. Does this verse also apply to your mind? What can you do to keep sins from having control over your body and mind? Does Romans 6:14-18 offer solutions to sinful behavior that you can actually use, or do those words just sound good?
3. Romans 8:28 is often misquoted. Does this verse mean that God wants good things to happen to all people, or even to all Christians? What is the difference in "for your good" and "good things?"

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 10

**Narrator:** Phoebe

**Primary Scriptures:** Romans 9-16

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Rome

**Location:** Roman Empire; Italy; Rome

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 57 Paul writes *Romans* while in Corinth

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Romans 9:18; 10:17; 11:6, 29; 12:1-2, 9-12, 17-18, 21; 13:1, 14; 14:12, 17-18

Some of the New Testament's most challenging verses to understand are found in *Romans*. Romans 9:10-26 address Paul's thoughts on why God makes some of the choices He makes. This glimpse of God's thoughts provides Christians with some of their most important information about God's will, mercy, and justice.

Paul continues teaching on these subjects as he talks about the people of Israel and how that tradition affects the ability of the Gentiles to be saved. Verses such as Romans 11:29 continue to give us a glimpse into God's mind.

Since all Scripture is God-breathed, it is a bit presumptuous to rate some Scriptures above others. But it is fair to say Romans 12 rates alongside 1 Corinthians 13 as two of the most influential chapters in Paul's letters. Thinking of Romans 12 as a very meaty, theological sandwich, these are the two "bread" verses: "I beg you by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," and "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

In modern times, there is nothing quite as contentious as politics. If everybody paid attention to Romans 13:1-6, there would be a lot less rancor and despair.

Sometimes it is tempting to judge non-Christians by the same standards as Christians. However, Romans 14 is a good example of Paul's instructions about the ways Christians should treat each other, where he gives a very high but compassionate standard. Wanting everyone to understand the seriousness of the matter, he adds in Romans 14:12-13, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore."

While *Romans* is a book of instruction to Christians about behavior and belief, it's always important to remember that a primary purpose of all Christians is to glorify God, as Paul so eloquently states in Romans 15:6.

### Discussion Questions:

1. When you observe passages like Romans 9, how important is it for you to have a basic understanding of the Old Testament?
  2. Based on Romans 9:13-14, do you feel like God is fair? According to Romans 9:18-21, who has the sole right to determine what is fair and just?
  3. Does Romans 10:14-15 convince you of the importance of missionaries?
  4. How do you understand Romans 14:10-12?
  5. How could your church act with one mind and one voice to glorify God (Romans 15:6)?
  6. Romans 15:24 and 28 say that Paul planned to go to Spain. Do you think he accomplished that goal?
  7. Romans 16:3 says Aquila and Priscilla are in Rome. Why is that important?
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1. Paul used so much information included in the Old Testament, that it is hard to follow his reasoning without having a working knowledge of the Old Testament. 7. Aquila and Priscilla were trained by Paul in Corinth and Ephesus. They would certainly be mature and knowledgeable influences in the establishment of the church in Rome.

### Application Questions:

1. Read Romans 10:9-13. As with many passages in Romans, people have different understandings of these verses. Do you view these as describing *all* that needs to be done for salvation, or as describing *some* of what needs to be done for salvation? What does it mean for you to call on the name of the Lord?
2. Pick three verses at random from Romans 12 and contemplate ways you can immediately apply them to your life.
3. Read Romans 14:21. Is there anything you ought not to be doing since it might cause someone to stumble spiritually? If you acted in love, what would you do to remedy the situation? Has anyone ever caused you to stumble spiritually? What, if anything, should you do about that?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Romans 12:6 says we have different gifts, and then goes on to list some gifts given to people. What gifts do you have, and how can you develop them further? How can you use your gifts to benefit others instead of yourself?
2. Romans 12:9 says to hate what is evil. What is something you know to be evil, but have ignored or given passive approval to?
3. Think of a situation in your life where you can apply Romans 12:21.
4. According to Romans 16:8, what sorts of things will people do in an effort to deceive and influence?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 11

**Narrator:** Tychicus

**Primary Scriptures:** Ephesians 1-6

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Ephesus

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Ephesus

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
AD 61 Paul writes *Ephesians* while imprisoned

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12, 18; 2:1-2, 8-10; 3:10, 16-17; 4:12-13 22-24; 29-30; 5:3, 15-17, 21; 6:4, 11-13

This episode assumes Paul wrote *Ephesians* in about 61 AD, while imprisoned in Rome. A few years earlier, Paul lived in Ephesus for about three years during the Third Missionary Journey, so he knew many of the Christians in the church there. From Paul's interactions with their elders at the end of that journey, we know the people of Ephesus loved him, and he loved them back.

The church at Ephesus had been founded and established by Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul. It seems they built a firm foundation because Paul does not have to address any obvious problems in this letter to them.

If you were to be banished to an island and only got to take one of Paul's letters, which one would you take? *Ephesians* would be well worth considering because in it, Paul shares theological insights and very practical information for living a Christian life.

In his opening statements, Paul offers insights about God's will and predestination that have kept theologians befuddled and arguing through the centuries. One thing not up for disagreement is this truth: God is above all things and over all things. Through His mercy and grace, He has given life to those who follow Him. Ephesians 2:8-10 are some of the most familiar, and influential, verses in the Bible. It is worth the time to read these verses in various versions of the Bible in an effort to glean everything you can from them.

Ephesians 4-6 give guidance about powerfully living in unity in the church, within families, and among individual Christians. The Ephesians lived in a society that reveled in drunkenness, sexual excess, and idolatry. The information Paul gives them about righteous living may sound elementary to modern Christians, but it would have been surprising news to many of them. Nevertheless, everything Paul tells the Ephesians remains relevant in the modern world. That is one reason *Ephesians* is so important to contemporary Christians.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Since *Ephesians* is written to the entire church at Ephesus, choose some passages at random and explain how they could be applied both to the church and to individuals.
2. The phrase “to the praise of his glory” appears three times in Ephesians 1<sup>1</sup>. What does that mean in general? What does it mean to your life today?
3. The idea of predestination permeates Ephesians 1:3-14. How would you define *predestination*? What does that mean for you and for the rest of the world?
4. Ephesians was written as a letter to the church at Ephesus and its members. Your Bible probably has chapters, verses, paragraphs, and section headings which have all been added. Try to see how you would understand Chapters 4, 5, and 6 if you only had it in letter form. Would you see Paul’s instructions to the family as just an extension of his instructions to the church? Would you think of spiritual warfare as being an individual battle or a battle as a church community (or both)?

### Application Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 at least five times out loud, pausing each time to contemplate it. How have you been saved? Who causes you to be saved? Is your salvation earned or is it a gift? Are you a special person designed by God, or just one faceless person among seven billion on earth? What did God prepare for you to do?
2. Looking at Ephesians 4:11-13, what are some works of service you can start doing to help build up the church you attend?
3. Looking at Ephesians 4:15, how can you speak the truth in love to someone about a difficult situation that needs to be addressed?
4. Ephesians 4:20-24 talks about the old self and the new self. In your life, what did your old self look like? What does your new self look like?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prays for the “eyes of your heart” to be enlightened. What does that mean to you? How could you “see” better with the eyes of your heart?
2. Based on Ephesians 3:16-19, what kind of love does Jesus have for you? How easy or difficult is it for you to receive that love?
3. It is work having friends and being a friend. If you behave according to Ephesians 4:2, will you have more friends?
4. Looking at Ephesians 4:29, what would you say is unwholesome talk? Is it swearing? Is it saying mean things? Is it telling things in such a way that it is deceptive?
5. Based on the movies and games you have seen, are battles best fought as individuals or as teams? Reading Ephesians 6:10-17, do you see spiritual battles fought as individuals or as units of people?

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<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 12

**Narrator:** Onesimus

**Primary Scriptures:** Colossians 1-4

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Colossae

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Colossae

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 61 Paul writes *Colossians* while imprisoned

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Colossians 1:10, 15-17, 27; 2:2, 8, 23; 3:1-2, 5, 9-11, 14-15, 17

This episode presumes Paul wrote *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon* at the same time, and sent them by Tychicus and Onesimus. *Colossians* may have been written to all of the churches in the Lycus Valley, not just one particular church among them. Based on Colossians 4:2, Paul probably wrote and sent a letter to the church at Laodicea at the same time, but no copy of that letter is known to exist.

Paul lived in Ephesus for three years during the Third Missionary Journey, so he personally knew most people in the church of that large city. It is possible the church at Colossae was started during that period by one of the people working with Paul. The Bible doesn't say whether Paul had been to Colossae or if he personally knew its leaders.

Based on Philemon 1:1-2, Philemon was a leader in the church at Colossae. Onesimus was a runaway slave owned by Philemon, and Paul was sending him back to Philemon. You can rightly guess Paul's instructions about slaves and masters in both *Ephesians* and *Colossians* were pointed straight at Philemon while also intended for all other Christians. For this reason, it is profitable to read those passages and *Philemon* at the same time to get better context.

Colossians 2:8 and 2:16-28 are indications the church at Colossae was being influenced by false teachers. In response to this, and in an effort to make sure the Colossians knew the true Gospel, Paul spends much of the first part of the letter explaining the Gospel and the supremacy of Christ while refuting false teachings. One of the most powerful of Paul's statements is found in Colossians 1:15, which says Jesus is the exact image or representation of God, the firstborn over all creation. This verse would be instrumental throughout the coming centuries as theologians tried to understand the true nature of Christ.

As you read Chapters 3 and 4, remember the Christians in Colossae needed to learn the fundamentals of living with Christian morals. They grew up in a society where people worshiped false gods, and participated in drunkenness and sexual immorality as normal behavior. They needed to learn to behave properly as individuals and as family members.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did Paul personally establish the church at Colossae?
  2. Colossians 1:6 says the gospel is bearing fruit all over the world. What did Paul mean by that?
  3. Colossians 1:15 says Jesus is the exact image of God. What does that mean to you? How can you harmonize Colossians 1:16 with Genesis 1?
  4. Read Colossians 2:8. What do hollow and deceptive philosophies look like in the modern world?
  5. Colossians 2:20 says you died with Christ to the principles of this world. Dead people are not attracted to anything. Is it possible for you to act as a dead person to the attractions of the world? Have you ever really wanted something, and then quit wanting it? Did it have any attraction to you after you quit wanting it?
- 
1. Epaphras probably established the church while Paul was at Ephesus during the Third Missionary Journey (1:7, 1:12-13, 2:1). 2. He meant at least their world, which would be Asia (Turkey) and that part of the Roman Empire. We have no information about how much of the world had been evangelized by 60 AD.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul continually prayed for the Colossians. He prayed they would: be filled with the knowledge of God's will, live a life worthy of the Lord, please the Lord in every way, bear fruit in every good work, and grow in knowledge of God. Pick some people and pray that for them every day this week.
2. Colossians 1:21-23 is an exciting passage about salvation for Christians. Do you perceive you were separated from God because of your evil behavior? What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Have you ever been reconciled to another person? How can you encourage others to continue in their faith?
3. Colossians 2:13-15 is another exciting passage about salvation. What does it mean to be alive in Christ? Who provides salvation?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Colossians 2:8. What hollow and deceptive philosophies do our modern cultural figures promote? Study the philosophy of the Epicureans and list the similarities and differences between it and Christianity.
2. Many people are challenged with conflicts between what science sometimes says and what they think the Bible says. If you feel conflicted, who can you talk to about those things? Do you think God designed the Bible to provide answers to all of your questions, or does it have another purpose?
3. What would Colossians 3:2 look like in your daily life? Is that something you want?



**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 13

**Narrator:** Paul

**Primary Scriptures:** Philemon

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to Philemon about returning his slave, Onesimus

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Ephesus

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 61 Paul writes *Philemon* while imprisoned

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Philemon 1:6, 7, 15

This episode presumes Paul wrote *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon* at the same time, and sent them by Tychicus and Onesimus. Based on Colossians 4:2, Paul probably wrote and sent a letter to the church at Laodicea at the same time.

Paul lived in Ephesus for three years during the Third Missionary Journey, so he personally knew most people in the church of that large city. It is possible that the church at Colossae was started during that period by one of the people working with Paul. The Bible doesn't say whether Paul had been to Colossae or if he personally knew its leaders.

Based on Philemon 1:1-2, Philemon was a leader in the church at Colossae. Onesimus was a runaway slave owned by Philemon, and Paul was sending him back to Philemon. You can rightly guess Paul's instructions about slaves and masters in both *Ephesians* and *Colossians* were pointed straight at Philemon while also intended for all other Christians. For this reason, it is profitable to read those passages and *Philemon* at the same time to get better context.

Many modern people are displeased that neither Jesus nor Paul overtly condemned slavery, not content that the teachings of Jesus and Paul are certainly against slavery. It seems that both Jesus and Paul were much more concerned in their cultural moment with people being freed from the slavery of sin rather than the slavery of an earthly master. Perhaps they knew if all earthly masters became serious practicing Christians, then slavery would cease.

Philemon 1:11 says physical slaves are actually worthless, while Philemon 1:16 shows that having a brother or sister in Christ is invaluable. If all Christians lived by this value system, no one would desire to have slaves.

Your understanding of *Philemon* is possibly influenced by your thoughts on whether Paul and Philemon had a personal relationship. Philemon 1:22 might indicate they knew each other, but other verses could lead you to the opposite conclusion. It is interesting to read this very short letter two ways: read it first as if Paul does not personally know Philemon, then as if they are good friends.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Describe slavery in the Roman Empire. How does that differ from slavery in the United States prior to 1865?
  2. Why didn't Jesus and Paul overtly condemn the practice of slavery in the Roman Empire? Does a verse like Galatians 3:28 undermine the existence of slavery?
  3. In what order did Paul want Philemon to hear his letters of *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*?
  4. Onesimus went from being worthless to having great worth. What did he do to make that happen?
  5. Why did Paul ask Philemon to prepare a guest room for him?
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1. Up to one-third of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were slaves. They were obtained as victims of war, purchased from slave-traders who may have kidnapped them or purchased them, people who went into too much debt, and children of slaves. Masters had the power of life-and-death over slaves. Slavery was seen as a result of misfortune. Slaves in the United States were primarily kidnapped from Africa or were children of slaves. Slavery in the United States was very much about racial inequality, with slaves seen as having less intrinsic "worth" than non-slaves. 4. Became a Christian. 5. Perhaps he really did expect to visit Philemon, but he might have used it as a pressure point.

### Application questions:

1. Do you treat any types of people as having less "worth" than you by ignoring them, underpaying them, or saying mean things to them? How can you change these values?
2. The word "therefore" at the start of Verse 8 indicates that Paul was overtly setting up Philemon to feel obliged to do what Paul wanted. Do you find this to be a good strategy to get people to do what you want them to do?
3. Owners and slaves were obviously distinctly different in the early church, and it seems as if people treated them differently. Do you treat people in your church or at work differently based on their social or economic status?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. One of the most common practices of young people is to group themselves based on popularity, looks, interests, or athletic ability. What can cause this to be destructive behavior? How can you help people feel better about themselves?
2. Paul wanted Philemon to do something that would cost a lot. How do you encourage people to do things you want them to do? Do you tend to use persuasion, compliments, or threats?
3. Do you generally perceive that people have equal worth, or are you swayed by money, popularity, or intelligence? Are there types of people you are uncomfortable being around?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 14

**Narrator:** Epaphroditus and Euodia

**Primary Scriptures:** Philippians 1-4

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the church in Philippi

**Location:** Roman Empire; Macedonia; Philippi

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 61 Paul writes *Philippians* while imprisoned

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1:3-5, 12, 18, 21; 2:3, 5, 12-13; 3:7-8, 13-14, 20; 4:4-7

*Philippians* is probably the last letter Paul wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome. He wrote the *Philippians* to thank them for the offering they sent to support him while in prison, and to assure them that Epaphroditus recovered from his serious illness. It was probably written soon after *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, so it has some similarities to those letters. The letter is attributed to Paul and Timothy.

This letter was written to both the members and leaders of the church in Philippi. This church was previously founded about a dozen years before when Paul, Timothy, Luke, and Silas baptized Lydia and her household on the Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16:11-15). Paul references this joyous event in *Philippians* 1:5. The first eleven verses of the letter show Paul and Timothy had a close relationship with this church.

When Paul writes about being in prison and living a life worthy of the Gospel, his words are encouraging. They do not seem to be a defense of his apostleship as in some of his other letters.

Paul's words in *Philippians* 2 are words of encouragement to become more mature and unified. The *Philippians'* increasing maturity is of utmost importance because they are still being harassed by the Jewish Christians, who teach the importance of following the Laws of Moses, signified by circumcision. Paul assures them those people are wrong. His words in *Philippians* 3:7-13 are some of his most powerful personal testimony.

*Philippians* 3:20-21 shows that the *Philippians*, like their neighbors in Thessalonica, are influenced by their understanding that Jesus will return and they will get to participate in the resurrection.

As in many of his other letters, Paul pleads for the church to be unified. As a part of this, Paul encourages them to have the right attitudes and thought processes. His words from *Philippians* 4:4-8 are some of the most encouraging words in any of his letters.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Paul and Timothy have a close relationship with the church at Philippi?
  2. In what ways would the gospel be spread by Paul's misfortunes?
  3. Philippians 2:12 is a controversial verse in some Christian circles. What do you think it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?
  4. Philippians 2:27 says Epaphroditus almost died from being sick. Why didn't Paul miraculously heal him?
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1. Paul and Timothy founded the church at Philippi on the Second Missionary Journey. They stayed at Lydia's house and probably formed a close relationship with her and the Philippian jailer. Paul probably stayed in Philippi at the conclusion of the Third Missionary Journey, and may have on other occasions.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul prays this for the Philippians: that their love may increasingly abound in knowledge and insight, that they be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless, and be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Choose someone and pray these things for them every day for the next week.
2. After reading Philippians 1:29, do you think you have ever suffered for Christ?
3. What would you change about your behavior within your church if you followed Philippians 2:1-4?
4. Philippians 3:6 uses the word "zeal". Do a word search for "zeal" and "zealous" and see what you can do to have more zeal for the Lord.
5. Philippians 3:13-14 are very valuable words to help you overcome your past, like Paul did. What do you need to forget so you can live for the future instead of the past? Are your past memories a jail for you?
6. What does it mean to live as citizens of heaven as Paul recommends in Philippians 3:20?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Philippians 1:27. What would it look like for you to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of Christ? Does that mean you have to be perfect?
2. Philippians 3:7-9 are some of the most far-reaching of Paul's words. These verses explain how Paul changed his life. What would it mean for you to quit valuing some of the things you do, and start valuing more important things? Can you truly change your behavior without changing what you value?
3. In Philippians 3:17, Paul talks about living according to a pattern. Do you see the Bible as providing lists of dos and don'ts, or providing patterns to live by?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 15

**Narrator:** Apollos

**Primary Scriptures:** First Timothy 1-6

**Story Summary:** Paul's first letter to Timothy, while Timothy is in Ephesus

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Ephesus

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
AD 62 Paul writes *1 Timothy* after being released from prison

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2:1-2, 3-4; 3:1, 15; 4:1, 7-8; 5:8; 6:6-10, 12, 17-19

The church in Ephesus was probably started at the end of the Second Missionary Journey by Priscilla and Aquila. Paul lived in Ephesus for more than two years during the Third Missionary Journey, and the church was well established by the time he wrote *First Timothy*. It appears that Paul's instructions in the letter to Timothy were for all churches, not just the one in Ephesus.

The main purpose of the letter is to instruct Timothy about refuting false teachers. Paul does not give an exact description of these false teachings, but they seem to be along the lines of what would become known as "Gnostic" teachings: physical things are evil so Jesus cannot have come in the flesh, certain people possess critical secret knowledge that leads to salvation, and secret ways to have access to an unknowable God.

Paul opens his letter by reaffirming his own credentials and restating the true Gospel. Since Timothy had been Paul's close companion for more than ten years, he certainly had heard all these things before and was totally convinced of their truth.

In the second chapter, Paul addresses matters having to do with orderly and proper worship that will lead to unity of the church, as the church in Ephesus had to blend people from various cultures, ethnic groups, economic circumstances, and social classes. Imagine an older, male Jewish goldsmith well-versed in the Old Testament worshiping alongside a young female slave who had previously worshiped at the temple of Artemis.

With those thoughts in mind, recognize that the third chapter is Paul's instructions about appointing a new kind of leader. Roman leadership was dominated by rich people and government officials. The church was going to need a new type of leader, and it would have to cultivate, grow, and teach them to become the type of people they needed to be.

All of those thoughts lead to the rest of Paul's teaching on growing and unifying a church. Through all his instructions, Paul's love and concern for Timothy shine through.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are the false doctrines Paul references in 1 Timothy 1:3?
  2. How do you know that 1 Timothy 1:9-10 is not an all-inclusive list of unrighteous behavior?
  3. In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul says he handed over two people to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme? What do you think that means?
  4. How much of 2 Timothy 2:8-12 is not applicable to modern churches? Why do you think it is or is not?
  5. 1 Timothy 3 gives qualifications for elders and deacons. How many, if any, of those qualifications are applicable to modern churches?
  6. Do you think 1 Timothy 6:1-2 are useful for dealing with today's business issues between employees and management?
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1. Based on the rest of the letter, the doctrines included speculations on the nature of good and evil, that physical things are evil so Jesus could not have come in the flesh, and that angels and myths have importance. 2. Because Paul adds "and for whatever else" to the list.

### Application Questions:

1. 1 Timothy 1:15 bluntly states Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Do you consider yourself a sinner or a good person? Is it possible to be both?
2. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 probably means modern Christians should pray for all people in governmental office, regardless of their political leanings. Do you do this? Are you willing to do this if they hold religious or ideological beliefs different from yours?
3. 1 Timothy 4:1 says that in later days, some will be deceived and abandon the faith. What can you do now to prevent being deceived by false teaching in the future?
4. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 promotes having godliness with contentment. What does that look like in today's business world? Why is wanting to get rich a trap?
5. At various times, Jesus and Paul warn against being rich or wanting to get rich, but 1 Timothy 6:17-19 gives instructions for rich people about how to behave. Is being rich a sin, or is it just a dangerous thing to be? Would it be dangerous for you to be rich?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. 1 Timothy 1:3 mentions false doctrines. Do you believe there are things that are fundamentally true or are all things relative? How can you recognize false doctrines?
2. Paul indicates that, if young people behave according to 1 Timothy 12-13, then older people will respect them and not look down on them. Do you think this still applies to modern culture? Are you willing to behave in those ways?
3. 1 Timothy 6:11 says to flee from pursuing money and instead to pursue righteousness and godliness. What does it look like in your life to pursue righteousness?

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 16

**Narrator:** Cretan elder

**Primary Scriptures:** Titus 1-3

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to Titus, while Titus was in Crete

**Location:** Roman Empire; Greece; Crete

**Time:**

AD 30	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
AD 48	Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
AD 50	Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
AD 53	Start of Third Missionary Journey
AD 66	Paul writes <i>Titus</i>

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 1:15-16; 2:7-8, 11-13; 3:1, 4-6, 8, 9-10

The first mention of Titus is in Galatians 2:1-3, when he accompanied Paul on the "famine visit" to Jerusalem. At the time, Titus was uncircumcised but was still accepted as a Christian. For nearly the next twenty years, Titus was a faithful assistant of Paul. There was probably little new in this letter that Titus had not heard many times before.

At the time of the writing of this letter, Titus was in Crete and Paul was spending the winter in Nicopolis, a major city on the west coast of Greece. Paul wanted Titus to get things in order with the many churches in Crete before joining him in Nicopolis. Paul is nearing the end of his life, and you can sense the urgency in his words.

One of the reasons Paul left Titus in Crete was to appoint elders in the many towns, and the qualifications Paul describes for elders are similar to those in *First Timothy*. Based on Titus 1:6-9, it was not going to be easy for Titus to find qualified elders.

One of the requirements was for elders to be capable of teaching true doctrine and refuting false doctrine. This requirement ties to Paul's insistence that Titus also refute the false teachers. Paul writes about the correlation between bad doctrine and bad behavior; he does not specify the false teaching, but it appears to have elements of myths about angels and philosophical teachings about the inherent evils of physical things.

Paul spends much of this letter writing about ways Christians are to behave. Rather than providing long lists of things to do and not to do, Paul instead gives them guidelines about doing good. He summarizes his desires in Titus 3:14, where he says Christians should concentrate on doing good so they can meet important needs and live productive lives.

Paul writes the letter to Titus, but knows it will be circulated among the churches, which is why he ends the letter by wishing grace on everyone.

As you read this letter, try to put yourself in Titus's shoes. He has been working alongside Paul for almost two decades, and knows Paul is nearing the end of his life. He surely wants to do a good job on Crete, but knows he is facing immense obstacles.

### Discussion Questions:

1. How did Crete's history and geography figure into Paul's thinking?
2. When did God give the promise of eternal life?
3. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? How do you know when a church is orderly?
4. What is your favorite verse in the passage of Titus 3:3-9? What does it mean to devote yourself to doing good (something Paul says twice in Titus 3)?

1. Crete is a large, mountainous island located south of mainland Greece. In Roman times, it had several ports, and was famous for its raucous lifestyle. Crete is the site of one of the oldest empires, the Minoans, and its people have always been independent in their thinking. Because of the mountains, there have always been numerous, scattered communities, with a few larger cities on the coasts. 2. Titus 1:2 before the beginning of time. 3. To help the churches get put in order and to appoint elders in every town.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul directed Titus to appoint elders in every town. Should churches still have elders? Should elders in modern churches be required to fit the requirements Paul gave Titus? If so, how can churches train their members to fit these qualifications? If not, what requirements should they have?
2. Paul insisted that elders have the ability to encourage others through sound doctrine and refute those without sound doctrine. Is that important just for elders or is it something all Christians should be able to do? Can you do it? If not, how can you become qualified?
3. Paul insists that some teachings are true and others are false. Are you willing to hold to such a standard in a modern culture that denies singular truth and insists many ways of thinking are equally good?
4. How can you apply Titus 3:1-2 in the modern world? Do those verses apply to paying taxes? To driving? To politics?

### Applications Questions for Teens:

1. Titus 1:10 indicates rebellion can be full of meaningless and deception. It is common for young people to want to rebel against authority and social norms. Why are teens so often drawn to rebellion? Are there ways to be rebellious that are not harmful?
2. Titus 1:16 talks of people who claim to know God but deny Him by their actions. Do you see other people do that? Do you ever do it yourself? Would your friends tell you if you were doing that?
3. Do you think Titus 2:4-5 is applicable in the modern world? Why or why not?
4. Titus 2:6 encourages young men to be self-controlled. What does that mean? Does James 3:2 also come to mind when you think about self-control?



**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 17

**Narrator:** Timothy

**Primary Scriptures:** 2 Timothy 1-4

**Story Summary:** Paul's second letter to Timothy

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Ephesus

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
AD 67 Paul writes *Second Timothy*

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** 2 Timothy 1:7, 9, 12; 2:15, 23-24; 3:1-4, 7, 16-17

Paul probably wrote the letter known as *Second Timothy* while imprisoned in Rome the second time. Paul thinks his life is near an end, although he believes Timothy has time to travel from Ephesus to Rome to be with him. In this letter he instructs Timothy to refute false teachers and to be faithful to God.

Throughout the letter Paul pleads for Timothy to remain faithful to him and to God. Paul opens the letter calling Timothy his "dear son" and reminds him of their early acquaintance on the Second Missionary Journey. In the first and fourth chapters, Paul gives names of people who have deserted him and those who have remained faithful to him. He even says that "everyone" in the province of Asia has deserted him.

Paul uses his life as an example that being an evangelist is not easy, but is full of hard work, self-discipline, and danger. With that caveat, Paul encourages Timothy that the price is worth prize. Not only will Timothy and Paul be rewarded, but others will receive eternal salvation because of their efforts.

Paul encourages Timothy to behave in such a way that he will be like an approved worker who correctly handles the words of truth. Then he will be able to refute false teachers who preach such falsehoods as: the resurrection has already come; it is unimportant how you behave; and false information that results in foolish arguments.

Timothy is warned to watch out for certain characteristics that mark false teachers and their followers. Paul's words in the beginning of Chapter 3 and continuing into Chapter 4 could lead modern readers to conclude they are living in the last days, just as Timothy probably thought he was. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 are vital for modern Christians to remember. *All Scripture is God-breathed, not just some of it.*

2 Timothy 4:3 is one of the great warnings of the Bible. It shows the importance of sound teaching and sound listening. It is always tempting to find teachers who teach what we want to hear. Instead, Paul instructs us to find teachers who teach the truth.

### Discussion Questions:

1. *2 Timothy* is probably the last writing of Paul that we have. How would you expect the last letters of someone to sound compared to ones written earlier in life?
2. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, what are some gifts the Spirit of God gives us? How are those attributes exhibited in your life?
3. How would you put 2 Timothy 1:9 into your own words? Does that change the way you feel about it?
4. Do you think 2 Timothy 3:1-5 also depicts the modern world? How can you keep from falling into the traps it describes? Which ones of those behaviors are you most tempted to follow?
5. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What does it mean that all scripture is God-breathed? Why is it important to know all parts of the Bible well?
6. Is 2 Timothy 4:2 applicable to all Christians or just to preachers?

### Application Questions:

1. Write a letter to someone you love. Pretend like it is the last letter you will ever write them.
2. Who is the happiest person you know? Does that person exhibit self-discipline? Is that person loving? What attributes of theirs might you adopt for your own life?
3. According to 2 Timothy 2:10, why does Paul endure his suffering? How much suffering are you willing to endure so that others may obtain salvation?
4. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 mean to you? Can you handle the word of truth well if you do not know what is in the Bible? Does handling the word of truth well include behaving rightly?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to 1 Timothy 1:14, where does the Holy Spirit live? Should you consider that when you evaluate your choices?
2. How important is it to be right when you have a disagreement with someone?
3. How do you apply 2 Timothy 2:22 to your life? Do you think the evil desires of youth are different from evil desires of adulthood?
4. Do you think people who criticize Christians are mean or captured by Satan? (see 2 Timothy 2:25-26)
5. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Can you be well trained in righteousness unless you know the Bible well? How can you get to know the Bible better?
6. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 is probably a pretty good description of many people in the modern world. How can you desire to know the truth instead of just listening to the things you want to hear? Is this hard to do with the intrusion of social media?