

Paul's **HELPFUL** Letter

A Kid-Friendly Journey
Through First Corinthians

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Paul's Helpful Letter: A Kid-Friendly Journey Through First Corinthians

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Published by: H&E Kids (an imprint of H&E Publishing).
Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

www.hesedandemet.com

Cover design and interior illustrations by Paul Cox, paulcoxillustration.com

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First Edition, 2021

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77484-030-6

eBook ISBN: 978-1-77484-031-3

*This book is dedicated to those who long for their little ones to boast in God
alone (1 Cor. 1:31)*

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INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this section of the book, you are likely a parent, grandparent, pastor, Sunday school teacher, or someone who simply cares a great deal about the spiritual formation of children. Whatever the case, I am thankful that you are burdened to see little ones grow into the “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). I want you to know from the outset that this resource was written by a sinner saved by grace who is blessed to be the husband of one amazing wife, the father of five wonderful children, and the pastor of a beloved church. Like you, I am concerned about the spiritual health of my children and want them to see and savor Christ in all of Scripture. As a preacher who spends a great deal of time in Paul’s epistles, I found myself looking for resources for children ages 8–12 that would help them engage with these letters that make up the majority of the New Testament. After fruitless searches, I decided to create my own. I am guessing you have some questions, so let me see if I can beat you to the punch:

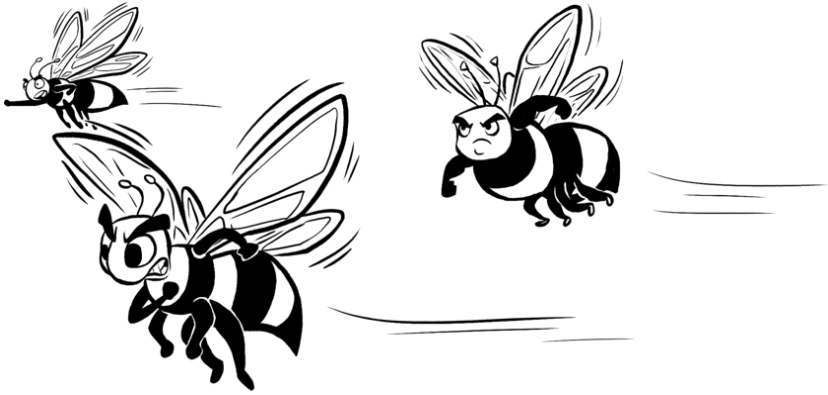
Why should children ages 8–12 study Paul’s letters? Aside from the sheer volume of content that comes to us from the apostle Paul, the doctrinal content of his epistles is meat and potatoes that our little ones need in their spiritual diet! Story Bibles, character studies, and picture books for children are a great blessing from the Lord for the nourishment of our children. However, they also need to engage with the mind-blowing truths that Paul sets forth.

Is it only for children ages 8–12? No, of course not. However, the content was created with this general age group in mind. If your little one is able to follow along and gain spiritual benefit from the study even though they are younger, great! Likewise, if older children find it

helpful, that is cause for rejoicing as well. Ages 8–12 is merely a recommendation!

How do I use this study? There is one chapter for each chapter of Paul's epistle with each concluding with the *Big Idea* (what is the chapter about in one sentence), *Talk About It* (questions to probe the heart), and a *Key Verse* (one verse from the chapter to memorize). You may find that your little learners benefit from reading one chapter and spending a few days thinking through the questions, referring back to Paul's letter, and memorizing the *Key Verse*. Perhaps you find that tackling one chapter a day is helpful for your children. Also, this resource can be used for children's curriculum. However you choose to implement it, the main goal is for the kids to grasp what Paul is saying.

As I was developing the content for this study, I had my eleven-year-old daughter read it and make notes as to words she couldn't understand and concepts that were blurry. She made recommendations for changes that kids would appreciate. In short, this resource has been kid-approved, thus making it kid-friendly!



1

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

“Help! Help! I need help!” yelled the little boy. His mother rushed from the kitchen and opened the front door so hard that she knocked over her favorite plant and cracked its brown clay pot. Unaffected, she ran to her son who was screaming from the corner of the yard. “What happened?” the boy’s mother screeched. “I was kicking my soccer ball and a hornet stung me in the leg. It hurts so bad!” the boy cried. His mother could see the swollen, red patch of skin where the angry insect had stung her beloved son. With her gentle hands resting on his shoulders, the boy’s mother walked him back into the house for some cold water, a kiss on the head, and some anti-sting treatment (i.e., a bowl of ice cream)!

For someone to be helped, they must have a problem that needs solving, right? First Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul in order to provide help to the Christians in Corinth. Were they being stung by hornets? No, not exactly. But they were in pain—spiritual pain. So, Paul came to the rescue by writing a long, caring, helpful letter to clear some things up and help them worship Christ with greater joy.

One of the main problems that the Corinthians needed help with was healing the division that plagued them. In other words, they weren't getting along very well: **"For it has been reported to me among Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers"** (1 Cor. 1:11). Some of them liked Paul. Some of them liked Apollos (another Christian leader). Some of them liked the apostle Peter. What's going on? The answer is a painfully familiar one—pride.

The Corinthians wanted to follow someone whom they thought was a great speaker or an influential leader. They wanted to be seen as wise and powerful. So, how did Paul help them? He reminded them that the most important thing is not being a hotshot by the world's standards. The most important thing is joyfully trusting in the wisdom of God: **"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"** (1 Cor. 1:18). When Paul preached in Corinth, he didn't try to compete with professionals who gave speeches for a living. No, he relied on God to work through the powerful message of the gospel!

Paul knew that the Corinthians, like you and me, would have the most joy when they stopped looking to other people and started looking to Jesus. So, he helped them by reminding them of God's amazing grace in their lives: **"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong"** (1 Cor. 1:26–27). God didn't save the Corinthians because they were powerful nor because they followed powerful people. God chose to save dirty, undeserving, weak sinners so that they would find their greatest joy in glorifying God alone. Rather than bragging about themselves, remembering the power of the gospel and the grace that God showed to them through Christ should make sinners brag on God! This is how Paul said it: **"And because of [God] you are**

in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:30–31).

The Corinthians needed help. They had been stung by the hornet of pride, and Paul rushed to help them. We can learn a lot from their mistake. It is easy to fall into the trap of wanting to look powerful in the eyes of the world. It is tempting to trade the cross of Jesus for something more flashy or cool. But even if the world thinks we are weak and silly, we know that our joy, strength, and comfort are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, let’s boast in him!



Big Idea: The best way to kill our pride and increase our joy is to look to the cross of Jesus Christ and follow him.

Talk About It: Are you ever tempted by pride? How? Why? How can preaching the gospel to yourself (i.e., remembering your sin and God's grace in Jesus) help you fight pride? What does it mean to "boast in the Lord"?

Key Verse: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).



2

GOD'S PERPLEXING POWER

The new kid walked timidly into Mrs. Johnson's third grade classroom. His glasses were too big for his face, and his blonde hair was messy. He carried a lunchbox that had a butterfly on it, and his pant legs were too short. As if his first day couldn't get any worse, he tripped on his way to his desk and nearly fell flat on his face! As would be expected, the other students started laughing and pointing in his direction. With red cheeks and shaky knees, the new kid sat in his desk and slid down in the seat, trying to disappear and be forgotten.

An hour passed—and then it happened. To his horror, the teacher smiled at him and asked him to come to the front of the class and write on the board. The other students gasped because the phrase he was asked to spell was *sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia*! The new kid bravely walked to the board and began writing in perfect cursive. To the astonishment of the class, he spelled it correctly too! With a grin, the young

man turned to face his now wide-eyed classmates and said, “This, my friends, is the medical term for what is commonly known as an ice cream headache.” The teacher couldn’t contain herself any longer. Mrs. Johnson jumped to her feet and excitedly told the class that the new kid was actually a five-time national spelling championship winner! He walked back to his desk with his chin up, whistling a tune.

Even though being able to spell big words and phrases isn’t a superpower, it’s pretty close. The new kid looked like an easy target for bullying, but his power was in his brain rather than his biceps. His story helps us understand what the apostle Paul tried to explain to the Corinthian Christians:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:2–5).

Even though Paul was a very talented guy, he didn’t go to Corinth and try to impress people with his speaking abilities. If he did that, he knew that people would be impressed and start following *him* rather than God! Paul was so eager for God to get the glory (rather than himself) that he refused to try to look powerful, to do and say things that would impress people. Paul knew that God’s power was perplexing; it showed up in unexpected ways. So, he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ!

But there’s another problem—sinful people can’t understand the gospel that Paul preached. Like the kids in the classroom who didn’t know what *sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia* meant (i.e., an ice cream headache), we need God’s power to help us understand God’s message! That’s why Paul said, **“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not**

able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Just like we need a medical dictionary to understand complicated phrases like the one the new kid spelled, we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand the gospel. So, Paul was obedient and preached about Jesus, the cross, his resurrection, and his coming back to earth at the end of time and trusted God’s Spirit to awaken sinners and enable them to see the glory of Jesus. When this happened, God would get all the glory, not Paul. Even though Paul was a smart man, he did not have the power to change someone’s stony heart to a tender, God-honoring heart. Only the Spirit of God working through the gospel can do that!

Did you know that you can have a superpower too? No, you can’t fly through the air or shoot lasers from your eyes. You can have something infinitely better and way more powerful—the ability to understand the gospel. When you hear the gospel preached at church, taught at home, or sung in a song, the Holy Spirit can help you see your sin, God’s holiness, and Christ’s power to save you by taking your punishment on the cross. To many people, the gospel seems foolish. It looks weak and silly. But when the Holy Spirit enters your heart, he shows you the truth and helps you understand God’s truth. This is why Paul makes the amazing statement that, by faith in Jesus, “**...we have the mind of Christ**” (1 Cor. 2:16). Like the new kid at school, the gospel has a perplexing power!



Big Idea: Even though others might think it is silly, we should boldly share the gospel because the gospel has the power to save sinners.

Talk About It: According to 1 Corinthians 2:1–5, why did Paul go to Corinth and preach the gospel? Why do sinful people think that the gospel looks weak or silly? What does the Holy Spirit do to help them understand it so that they see and love Jesus?

Key Verse: “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).