

Paul and the Corinthians

Acts 18:1–11; 2 Corinthians 8:1–5, 12–15; 9:6–8



Story Summary

Paul visited the city of Corinth and preached to both Jews and Gentiles there. He worked with Aquila and Priscilla as a tentmaker. The church grew strong. Later Paul wrote to the church at Corinth encouraging them to give generously and cheerfully so that everyone could have their needs met. He told them of the churches in Macedonia who gave even during a very difficult time.

Faith Link

We can give generously.

Bible Essay

by Joanna Harader

In the eighteenth chapter of Acts, we meet another important woman in the early church: Priscilla. She and her husband, Aquila, host Paul in Corinth, then travel with him to Syria (Acts 18:18). The couple is mentioned again in three of the New Testament letters (Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). It seems that they had a long missionary career, sometimes traveling with Paul and sometimes staying behind in a community to provide instruction and leadership.

We know that the church in Corinth is significant for Paul. Not only does he meet Priscilla and Aquila there, but he finds other supporters as well. Paul stays in Corinth for a year and a half, and after he leaves, he continues to offer support and guidance through his letters. The New Testament contains two letters from Paul to the church in Corinth, and scholars believe Paul wrote additional letters that have been lost.

Paul's letters provided important encouragement and direction to the early Christian communities. Imagine what it would be like to try to follow Jesus' teachings and function as a church when the Christian faith itself was brand new. There were no church by-laws, no established New Testament, no denominational structures, and no Sunday school curriculum. We can imagine that these letters were written with great care and received with much excitement and gratitude.

In today's passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul requests that the believers in Corinth share their financial resources with the churches of Macedonia. In making this specific request to the believers in Corinth, Paul outlines general Christian principles of generosity that still speak to us today: material poverty does not lead to poverty of spirit; it is a *privilege* to share "in this ministry to the saints" by giving money (2 Corinthians 8:4); we should give out of our abundance to establish a "fair balance" (8:13); we should give cheerfully; and finally, God will provide for us.

In sharing these principles for Christian generosity, Paul relies on a core Jewish story. In 2 Corinthians 8:15, Paul references Exodus 16:18: "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little." When the Israelites had escaped slavery in Egypt, they found themselves wandering and starving in the wilderness. God generously provided manna for them to eat, and the divine command was that they only take as much as they needed for each day—that all people would have enough and no one would take too much.

Paul's letter to one of the first churches still speaks to those of us striving to follow Jesus today. Ultimately, says Paul, the followers of Jesus are joyfully generous with each other because God is graciously generous with us.

The New Testament is a precious resource that the earliest Christians did not have. What is your favorite verse or story from the New Testament? Spend some time this week meditating on that passage. When have you experienced the generosity of other people? When have you experienced the joy of being generous?

God, thank you for your generosity toward me. Let me give joyfully, out of my abundance, to those who have need. And let me receive with grace what others seek to give. Amen.

Sing and Pray



Sing “Come to the Table” from *Worship Songs for Children*, track 1.

Continue prayers of intercession or “help others” prayers using play dough. Primary children can use Primary Leaflet page 2 for this activity; everyone else can simply set their play dough shapes on a piece of paper.

Give each person a portion of play dough. Form a small plate from the dough and set it on a piece of paper or the world picture in the leaflet. Pray:

God, help those who are hungry today to find healthy food to eat.

Form a small cup. Pray:

Help those who are thirsty today to find clean water to drink.

Form a sad face. Pray:

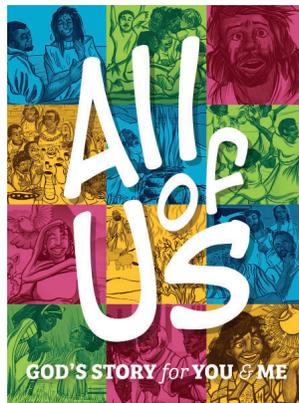
Help those who are sad or lonely today to find a friend who will listen to them.

Form a happy face. Pray:

Give us peace and hope. Amen.

Supplies: *Everybody Sing: Worship Songs for Children*, CD or MP3 player, play dough, paper, Primary Leaflet

Read and Wonder



Turn to chapter 40 in *All of Us*. Read the God’s Story prompt on page 186 before starting the story. Choose one of the following ways to tell the Bible story:

- **“Read Together” version (pages 186–187):** Set up a tent in the room, either a prefabricated tent or one created with sheets and blankets. Choose people to read the italic text, the plain text, the voice of God, and the letter in bold text. Sit inside or under the tent as you read the story.
- **Illustrated version (pages 188–189):** Have volunteers take turns reading the sentences under each illustration. Have everyone tap their feet once each time they hear the words *give, gave, or share* (seven times total).

Wonder and talk together about the Bible story and how it connects to your experiences as a family. Refer to the illustrations in *All of Us* to help children recall what happens in the story.

- What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “If you plant a little, you will gather a little. If you plant a lot, you will gather a lot”?
- (Page 189, top illustration) I wonder why the churches of Macedonia gave money even though they were poor.
- Invite one person to read the My Story prompt on page 187. Allow time for everyone to respond.
- (Page 189, bottom right illustration) Talk about a time someone shared with you. What could our family share with others?

Optional: Read the Epilogue on page 190 of *All of Us*.

Supplies: *All of Us: God’s Story for You & Me*, tent or sheets and blankets

Read, Watch, Listen

Books: *The Quiltmaker’s Journey* by Jeff Brumbeau; *The Girl and the Bicycle* by Mark Pett

Art: *Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving* by John Frank; *Priscilla* by Silvia Dimitrova

Video: “God’s Story: Generosity” by Crossroads Kids’ Club (YouTube)

Songs: “Don’t Be Afraid” by John Bell; “Someday Soon Our Time Will Come” (YouTube)

Explore

Create

Paul wrote letters to encourage his friends. Make and send encouragement cards. Write or stamp messages such as “thank you,” “I miss you,” “get well,” “I love you,” or “you are special” on card stock or construction paper folded in half. Decorate with various art supplies. Send your finished cards to friends and family.

Supplies: Card stock or construction paper, markers, decorative stamps, art supplies (foam stickers or shapes, sequins, glitter glue), envelopes, stamps

Move

Paul worked with his friends Priscilla and Aquila. Play a game of charades, taking turns acting out an activity you like to do with your friends. Everyone else can guess the activity. Play as a large family or in teams.

Make Peace

Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla lived and worked together as they made tents. Our relationships with others in the community deepen when we work alongside each other. Work together to wash, cut, and chop a variety of fruits to make a salad. Talk about how the ingredients combine to create a delicious treat. When God’s people work together, more can be accomplished than working alone.

Supplies: Variety of fruits (such as strawberries, cantaloupe, pineapple, grapes, kiwis), cutting board, knives, large bowl, mixing spoon, serving cups and spoons



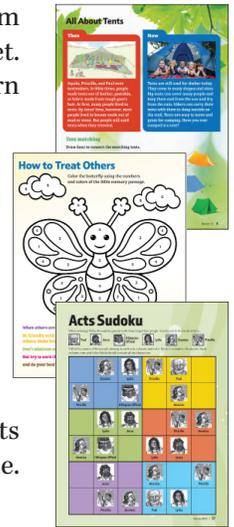
Leaflets and Spotlight

Early Childhood: Share the story poem on page 1 of the Early Childhood Leaflet. Match the feelings on page 2. Learn about tents on page 3.

Primary: On page 1 of the Primary Leaflet, match the pictures on the left with the story boxes on the right. Color the picture on page 3, following the color-coded words of the Bible memory passage.

Older Elementary: Complete the Acts Sudoku on page 37 of *Spotlight Magazine*.

Supplies: Early Childhood and Primary Leaflets, *Spotlight Magazine*, pencils, crayons



Bless



Sing “Life Together” from *Worship Songs for Children*, track 13. Read one of the Blessing Cards from page 8 of this guide.

Pray:

God, thank you for our church community and our family. Help us know how to serve each other and how to serve you. Amen.

Continue talking and learning about the Bible story throughout the week using ideas from the “Family Fun” pages in the Early Childhood and Primary Leaflets.

Supplies: *Everybody Sing: Worship Songs for Children*, CD or MP3 player, Blessing Cards (p. 8)

