



Messy messages and messengers

How do you keep in touch with people you love
when you're locked UP, not just locked DOWN?

Activity time

Imagine you're Saul, who's now called Paul. Since you met Jesus on the road to Damascus, you've been travelling around telling anyone who will listen that Jesus is God. You've made friends in many places who now follow Jesus... but you've made enemies too. And those enemies have got you locked up in prison for talking about Jesus. How are you going to keep on sharing the message of Jesus with these new Jesus-followers?

If you can't get exactly these materials, just see what you can find around the house instead!

1 Epistles at dawn

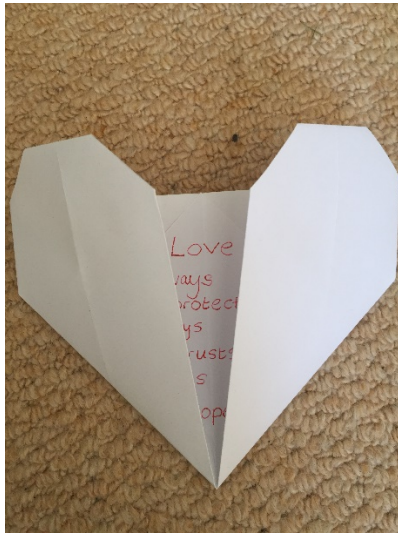
You will need: pens or pencils; paper

Be the quickest draw in the house! Play Pictionary with the picture words from this list. Then, if you're interested in any of them, find them in Paul's letters by looking them up in the Bible, either in a book or online.

Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)	Race (Philippians 3:13–14)
Ransom (1 Timothy 2:6)	Thief (1 Thessalonians 5:4)
Potter (Romans 9:21)	Rubbish (Philippians 3:8)
Seal (2 Corinthians 1:22)	Treasure (2 Corinthians 4:7)
Waves (Ephesians 4:14)	Fruit (Galatians 5:22–23)
Armour (Romans 13:11–13)	

Talk about how Paul's letters are full of vivid word pictures to help his friends (and us) follow Jesus. Which word picture do you like best from this list? Can you think of any other great words or phrases Paul uses in his letters?

2 Love letter



You will need: square pieces of paper; pens

Make an origami heart: there's a really easy short video to follow [here](#). Open the front and write inside a short message about love. Choose one of the phrases from one of Paul's letters about love:

- Love is patient, love is kind
- Love does not envy
- Love does not boast
- Love is not proud
- Love does not dishonour others
- Love is not self-seeking
- Love is not easily angered
- Love keeps no record of wrongs
- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth
- Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres
- Love never fails
- And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

(Adapted from 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 13)

Talk about why you chose that particular phrase out of all of them. If you had a message written on the inside of you (like a word in a stick of seaside rock), what would you like that message to be? If Jesus had a message written on the inside of him, what do you imagine it would be?

3 Messy messages mailbox

You will need: any sort of clean junk container such as a box, packet or tub (the nearer in size and shape to a postbox, mailbox or pillar box, the better, but improvisation is perfect); coloured paper; paint or colouring pens; scissors; sticky tape; small pieces of plain card or paper

Design your container to look like a postbox or mailbox, with some sort of slot or door through which to post things. Decorate it appropriately. (It might help to have a close look at a postbox on your next walk, or take a photo of one or two examples to inspire you.) An alternative is to create a front door with a letterbox slit in it instead of a mailbox. While some members of the household are creating these, others might be creating a stash of ready-to-write postcards or tiny blank letters and envelopes from the spare card and paper. Use these to write 'Messy messages to God' over this week and post them into your mailbox as prayers. Remember God loves hearing from you, whether that's a letter, a whisper, a shout or a song – God delights in you.

Talk about the way Paul and others wrote letters about Jesus 2,000 years ago that we still read today to help us understand how to follow Jesus. They wouldn't have been letters in envelopes or postcards, but more like scrolls of papyrus sheets pasted together.

Celebration

Write or draw a simple message on a piece of paper and have a paper-plane-making competition to see whose flies furthest and/or most accurately. Messages can travel in many different ways, can't they?

Talk about some of this together:

You may have heard of 'chain letters' – they're usually nasty messages that threaten you with harm if you fail to send them on to other people. Paul's letters are the complete opposite of that – they are 'unchaining letters': letters that bring freedom, light and hope!

Paul went from travelling all over the Mediterranean area by road and by ship (and getting shipwrecked!) to being locked in prison for being a Christian. He wrote letters that escaped from prison and were so life-changing that they went all round the world and are still being read today. Here are some of his words that have broken out across geography and history to unlock people from chains 'inside us' like the chains of fear. Try reading this message about Jesus slowly three times, with a different person reading each time:

'If God is for us, who can be against us?... Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

(Paul's letter to the Romans 8:31-39)

Then tell each other what words stood out for you from Paul's message. Sometimes that's how God speaks to us, so make a note of these special words for your household and put them somewhere you can be reminded of them this week.

Prayer: Try a prayer based on Paul's prayer for his friends in Ephesus (in Ephesians 3:14-20):

I pray that God will reach into his treasure chest of gifts and give you the gift of power and strength, so that you will know just how much Jesus loves you. I pray that you will realise how wide and long and high and deep Jesus' love is for you, so your life will always be overflowing with God's love. Amen

You could say the [Lord's Prayer](#) and the [Messy Grace](#) (as the Grace comes from one of Paul's letters!).

Paul was very clever and inspired, and some of his letters are hard to understand at first. But like many good things, they are worth taking trouble and time over. If you've got some free time, try reading the letter to the Romans for yourself – it has changed the lives of many people, though bits of it are really hard and hundreds of books have been written to explain it!

Mealtime

See what letters or even words you can make with the food on your plate!