



On your marks

So much happens in the last week of Jesus' life and its events are so significant that it is important we find creative and memorable ways to share Jesus' journey towards the cross with our children and families. The following idea offers an interactive journey through Holy Week that involves everyone literally stepping into the story with their whole body! It is ideal for an all-age presentation on Good Friday or for sharing with a group of children and adults during, or in preparation for, Holy Week.

Get set

All you need is hands and feet! Practise telling the story first on your own with the actions so that it comes across from the heart, with energy and enthusiasm.

This idea first appeared in *Footsteps to the Feast* (2005, Barnabas for Children).

You will need:

- A4 cards
- lining paper
- coloured pens
- mission prayer magazines.

You can find the story in Acts 18:1-17. There is a retelling of the story in **The Barnabas Children's Bible** (story 342) if you have it.

Go!

Opening up the story

After such a whirlwind tour of the other Greek cities, God must have known that Paul needed a place to settle down for a while and relax, as well as a place where he could find friends who would look after him. It seems highly likely that Aquila and his wife Priscilla already knew of Paul because they were Jews too and they shared the same profession - tentmakers. Further, their families knew each other back in Tarsus where Paul grew up, and Aquila and his wife were also travellers - they had fled from persecution in Rome. Paul must have been so glad to meet up with like-minded friends.

They say that by linking people with other people who know each other, there are only six degrees of separation between everyone on the planet. This linking is made even more possible today because of increased travel and, of course, the Internet.

See how many different people and how many different countries you can make connections with by linking up people you know in your group or congregation with others elsewhere. You may discover



some surprising connections. How many different countries do you connect with between you? Have a map of the world handy and mark off the countries that are named.

Of course, through our faith in God, we are all only one degree of separation from anyone else who believes in Jesus, which is one of the reasons why we should pray regularly for each other in our global Christian family.

Telling the story

Write or print on to some A4 cards the different names mentioned **in bold** below of the people that Paul came to know in Corinth. As you tell the story of what happened, the people with the cards bearing those names should come up and join you as Paul the storyteller. Pause to imagine what each of these people were like: their characters and interests. They came from quite different backgrounds, but all sorts of people were becoming Christians in Corinth.

Tentmaking was an important skilled trade in those days, and Paul clearly used his training in this profession to earn some money to support his missionary work.

*After preaching at the synagogue in Corinth for a while, Paul moved on. However, his time there had not been in vain - the synagogue leader and his family had become Christians, along with the man who owned the house next door: **Aquila, Priscilla, Titius Justus and Crispus** were among the first Christians in Corinth.*

*Other early converts from there that are named in Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1) include **Gaius, Stephanas and Chloe**, as well as another Jewish leader called **Sosthenes**, and he also received support from the governor **Gallio**, who refused to take sides against Paul.*

But even Paul found it hard at times, so God needed to remind him that the Christian family was indeed growing and that God was drawing people to himself. On one occasion, God spoke to Paul in a dream:

Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.

Acts 18:9-10 (NIV)

Read out these words and get all the named people to call out their names when the end is reached - 'I have many people in this city'.

Talking about the story



It isn't easy to be in a minority. Paul did have his companions, Silas and Timothy, with him and probably Luke was there too, but nevertheless Corinth was a busy city with a large population for its day and so Paul must at times have felt a bit overwhelmed.

- How does God help you when you feel on your own as a Christian?
- Can you name other people you know who believe in Jesus - from places other than your church, for example, people at work or school, or in your street?
- How can it help us to know that we are part of a wider Christian family?

Playing with the story

On a large piece of lining paper, draw the outline of a big tree with many branches. This will become a Christian family tree for your church and community. However, unlike a normal family tree, people will be linked as friends rather than by family/blood connections.

Add people's names on the branches and then link them up with friends in your group, and then friends of friends, and so on. Fill up as many branches as you can in the tree. Finally, write the name of Jesus Christ at the base of the tree. He is the foundation of this family and, extending the metaphor further, his Holy Spirit is the life-giving sap that brings life to all the branches.

Reflecting on the story

Hand out some Christian mission magazines and invite everyone to find the names of people who are working as part of the kingdom of God either in this country or overseas. They may even find some names of people they already know linked to your own church. Many of these people are in lonely situations and, at times, must feel a bit like Paul did in Corinth.

Take some time to pray for these individuals, calling out their names and adding wherever possible a short prayer for them. Maybe you can use words based on God's words to Paul in Acts 18:9-10

Finish by reading some of the final verses of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:10-20) where he prays for those friends that he made in the city.