

The Plan to Stop Paul

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BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 23

MAIN POINT: When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

As Paul's third missionary journey came to an end, a prophet named Agabus warned him that the Jews would seize him in Jerusalem and hand him over to the Gentiles. (See Acts 21:10-11.)

But Paul did not hesitate. He returned to Jerusalem and was seized by a group of Jews who wanted to kill him because he taught things contrary to their law.

The Roman soldiers nearby saw the commotion and stepped in, taking Paul into Roman custody. Now Paul was in Gentile hands. Paul remained under Roman protection and was staying in the barracks when the Lord gave him a

message: “Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome” (Acts 23:11).

What a comforting message for Paul! The sovereign Lord told Paul his future: You’re going to Rome. Paul wasn’t exactly sure how he was going to get to Rome, but he could trust that God was working all things together for that purpose.

The next morning, Paul’s nephew uncovered a plot to kill Paul and reported it to the Roman army commander. The commander arranged for Paul to go to Caesarea, where he would be safe.

In this Bible story, we see God using human means to bring about His end. Even when others threatened his life, Paul trusted that God is faithful. He believed that God, who showed His love for the world by sending Jesus to die on the cross and rise again, would help him through hard times.

We too can risk everything to share the gospel with courage because we know that God loves us and will care for us. God calls us to be obedient and faithful as we take part in His greater plan to show His glory to us and through us for the fame of His name.



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Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Vary your voice:** Use different voices for the words of Paul and the words of the Lord.
- **Display a dramatic conversation:** Stand in a prominent place as Paul stood before the Sanhedrin.

The Plan to Stop Paul

Acts 23

The apostle Paul told people the good news about Jesus wherever he went. When he returned to Jerusalem, the believers were glad to see him. But many Jews did not like that Paul taught people they don't have to follow Jewish rules to be saved. So these Jews made a plan to stop Paul.

Paul was at the temple when a crowd of people dragged him away and tried to kill him. But a Roman official came and stopped them. This official arrested Paul and brought him to the Sanhedrin, a powerful group of Jewish priests and other leaders. Their job was to decide if a person had broken a Jewish law, and if so, to decide how that person should be punished.

Paul stood in front of the Sanhedrin and looked the men in the eyes. **"Friends," he said. "I have done what God wants me to do. I do not believe I have done anything wrong."** Paul explained that he had been arrested because he taught that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. The men in the Sanhedrin began arguing. Some of them thought Paul was right about the resurrection, and some thought he was wrong. **The Roman soldiers took Paul away to keep him safe.**

The next night, the Lord stood by Paul and gave him an incredible message: **"Have courage!" He said. "You told about Me in Jerusalem. I want you to tell about Me in Rome, too."**

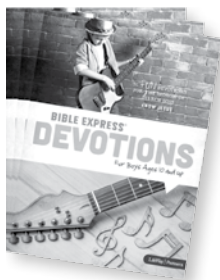
In the morning, a group of Jews got together and made a plan to kill Paul. They promised to not eat or drink until Paul was dead. **These men told the Jewish**

leaders about their plan.

Paul's nephew overheard this evil plan. He hurried to tell Paul what was going on. Paul told his nephew to report it to the commander.

The army commander said, "Don't tell anyone that you told me about this plan." Then the commander **told two of his officers to get together a large group of soldiers and horses. They brought a horse for Paul to ride on, and that night, the soldiers took Paul to Caesarea to see the governor.**

Christ Connection: Even when others threatened his life, Paul continued to obey Jesus. He believed that God, who showed His love for the world by sending His Son to die on the cross and rise again, would help him through hard times. We too can risk everything to share the gospel with courage because we know that God loves us and will care for us.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

SESSION TITLE: The Plan to Stop Paul

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 23

MAIN POINT: When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompts kids to think of a time they were in a difficult situation. Challenge them to think through that situation and try to discover any good that God brought during or after that hard time.

SAY • Sometimes it is hard to trust God when bad or hard things are happening. We must remember that God is good and in control. That's what the apostle Paul remembered when he was sharing the good news about Jesus and people made a plan to stop him. We'll learn what happened in our Bible story today.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Uncovered!" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Uncovered!" on the activity page. Kids should color the shapes by number to discover what today's Bible story is about.

SAY • Today's Bible story is about a plan to stop Paul. Paul wanted to preach about Jesus, but some people tried to stop him. We'll soon find out what happened.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Switch game

Set up four cones to form a large square. Position an additional cone in the middle. Invite kids to take turns playing a game. Five players will each stand next to a cone.

The player next to the middle cone will call out, “Switch!” All players must find a new cone—not the center cone—to stand next to. If two players meet at a cone, they should quickly play “Rock, Paper, Scissors” to determine which player may stay at the cone. Players who are not standing at a cone at the end of the round are out.

A new player from the sidelines will stand at the center cone to begin another round.

SAY • Each round, you planned to move to another cone. Sometimes another player stopped you by moving to the same cone. Today’s Bible story is about a plan some people made to stop Paul from telling people about Jesus. Let’s find out what happened.

OPTION 2: Dots and boxes

Instruct kids to form pairs. Give each pair a piece of paper and two markers of different colors. Lead each pair to draw a grid of dots—3-by-3 or 4-by-4. Players should take turns joining two neighboring dots with a horizontal or vertical line. When a player completes the fourth side of a box, she should write her initials in the boxes and draw another line. The player to complete the most boxes wins.

SAY • Was it hard to stop your partner from winning? Today’s Bible story is about a plan to stop Paul. Did God let this evil plan stop Him? Let’s find out.



• cones, 5

• paper
• markers, various colors

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate a deserted island by spreading brown sheets on the floor to look like sand. Use blue sheets as water. Use cardboard to create the front of a shipwrecked boat. Consider projecting the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- sunscreen
- journal
- pen

[Leader enters wearing dirty, worn (maybe even torn) clothing. The leader has sunscreen on his or her nose and a journal and pen in hand. As the leader walks out, he or she is surprised to see kids on the island too.]

LEADER • Whoa! Um, what are you guys doing here? *[Look around.]* I thought this was a deserted island. OK, am I seeing things again, or are you real? *[Walk over to some of the kids and reach out to see if they are real.]* When I won this contest, they said I would be dropped on a deserted island alone for five weeks, and now I find you guys. *[Look seriously at the kids.]*

Are you all friendly islanders? If you are friendly, I guess we can have this castaway experience together.

Actually, it might be great to have a little help because living on a deserted island has proven to be way more difficult than I had imagined, which reminds me of a story I have been reading.

See, this guy named Paul was in a difficult situation, but he still trusted God because he knew God can be trusted. He also had some friends who helped him out.

[*Point to the kids.*] What do you say we dive in more to what God has to teach us together on this island?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Our big picture question is, *When should we tell others about Jesus?* Well, God has commanded believers to share the gospel with others. God doesn't suggest, He commands us. *We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle. Point out previous stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

LEADER • Wow, look at all these stories! The Bible is full of stories, and they all fit together to tell the bigger story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus. Today's Bible story is about Paul, a sinner saved by Jesus. Paul dedicated his life to sharing the gospel—the good news about Jesus—with others. But not everyone liked Paul's message. Check it out.

- Bibles
- “The Plan to Stop Paul” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 23. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Plan to Stop Paul.”

LEADER • The things Paul was teaching—that Jesus is God’s Son and that a person can be saved by trusting in Him—did not sit well with the Jews. They did not agree with Paul’s teachings, and they wanted to kill him. Thankfully, a commander of the Roman army came along and rescued Paul. And by rescued, I mean he put Paul into prison.

Paul sure was in a difficult situation here, wasn’t he? Obeying God didn’t make Paul’s life easier, but Paul had a source for his strength and courage. What was that source? *[Allow kids to respond.]* The Lord supplied all the strength Paul needed.

Paul was under Roman protection when the Lord gave him a message: “Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome” (Acts 23:11).

When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus. God had a plan for Paul to preach about Jesus in Rome.

Christ connection

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • Paul trusted God. Even when others threatened his life, Paul continued to obey Jesus. He believed that God, who showed His love for the world by sending His Son to die on the cross and rise again, would give Paul everything he needed to do God’s plan. We too can risk everything to share the gospel with courage because we know that God loves and

cares for us. *When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.*

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Philippians 1:20-21.

LEADER • Paul knew he wasn't the star of the story, but Christ was. Paul hoped that Christ would be highly honored in his body, whether by life or by death.

As we sing this song together, may it be our prayer that Christ will be highly honored by our lives.

Lead boys and girls in singing "My Eager Expectation."

- Key Passage Poster
- "My Eager Expectation" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Remember our big picture question and answer: *When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.* How do you feel when you think about telling other people about Jesus? Check out this video.

- "Unit 34, Session 1" discussion starter video

Show the "Unit 34, Session 1" discussion starter video.

Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- What risks did Ethan face for telling his friends about Jesus?
- What risks do we face in telling others about Jesus? Is Jesus worth the risk?
- What is God's plan for us? How does God accomplish His plan?

LEADER • Today's Bible story shows how God can use anyone in His plans. God used the Roman army—most of whom did not believe in Jesus—to spare

Paul's life. Like Paul, we too can risk everything to share the gospel with courage because we know God loves us and will care for us.

God calls us to be obedient and faithful as we take part in His greater plan to show His glory to us and through us.

• "Unstoppable Victory"
song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • How encouraging it is to know God can use ordinary people to do amazing things for His glory! No one is like God. Let's remember this as we sing to Him today.

Sing together "Unstoppable Victory."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, we know You love us because You sent Your Son to die on the cross for us and then rise again. There is no one like You, Lord. Give us power to obey You, and give us courage to share Your love with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 23

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KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- foam ball

Tip: If your group is large, form circles of no more than 10 kids.

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read Philippians 1:20-21 aloud.

Give a foam ball to one player in the circle. Explain that the player with the ball will say the first word in the key passage and then toss to ball to another player, who will say the next word, and so on until kids say the entire key passage and reference. Allow kids to refer to the key passage poster if they need help remembering the words.

SAY • This is a bold statement made by Paul, but he could say this because he believed firmly in the love of Christ and trusted Him with his life.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Invite kids to open their Bibles to Acts 23. Remind them that Acts is the fifth book of the New Testament. Ask them what four books come before Acts. (*the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*)

Explain that you are going to ask a question about someone in today's Bible story. Kids not only have to guess the answer, they need to say the verse number in Acts 23 that supports their answer.

1. Who was brought before the leaders and questioned? (*Paul, Acts 23:1*)
2. What was the message God gave Paul? (*“Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome”; Acts 23:11*)
3. Who made a plan to kill Paul? (*a group of Jews, Acts 23:12*)
4. What did the Jews promise not to do until they killed Paul? (*eat, Acts 23:14*)
5. Who overheard about this evil plan? (*Paul’s nephew, Acts 23:16*)
6. What did the commander tell the young man after hearing the news? (*“Don’t tell anyone you told me about this plan,” Acts 23:22*)
7. What plan did the governor put in place? (*He summoned soldiers and horses and even brought a horse for Paul to ride on. The soldiers took Paul to see the governor; Acts 23:23-24*)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

SAY • Even though there were many things going on and people involved in this story, God was still in control. Paul trusted God and continued to obey Jesus.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Triangle tag

Form groups of four players. Three of the four should hold hands in a triangle. The fourth player is outside the triangle. He is *It*. Choose one of the three players holding hands to be the “runner”—the person to be tagged.

The player outside the triangle, *It*, will try to tag the “runner.” *It* may not go inside the triangle and may not lean on the arms of those forming the triangle. The players holding hands should turn their triangle to keep the runner



away from *It*. If *It* catches the runner, players should switch roles and play again.

SAY • What made this game easy or hard? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Like the runner had teammates to protect him or her from being tagged, Paul had friends who helped protect him from those planning to kill him. Paul believed that God can be trusted. God loves us and cares for us.

OPTION 2: Pray for missionaries

- missionary information
- "Missions Prayer Cards" printable (optional)

Before the session, collect some pictures or names of missionaries your church supports who are serving in different parts of the world.

Form groups so that several kids are sitting around an information sheet about each missionary. Talk about what difficult things these missionaries may face as they share Jesus with others. Then guide kids to pray for these missionaries, asking God to protect them and give them courage to honor Christ in all they do.

Consider providing a copy of the missions prayer cards to each kid. Encourage boys and girls to read the cards and pray for the people of Atlanta, Georgia, USA; Romania; the United Kingdom; and Turkey. Pray for missionaries and other believers who are sharing the gospel in these places.

SAY • A *missionary* is a Christian called by God who obeys and goes to tell another group of people the good news about Jesus. Missionaries may face persecution and be hurt or even killed for sharing the gospel.

When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus. Even today, missionaries risk their lives to tell others about Jesus. Let's pray for them as they trust and obey Jesus.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for His Word and asking for strength and courage to share the gospel, even in difficult situations. Pray for joy and peace in obeying Jesus' command to share the good news with the world.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Sharing the Good News" on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Sharing the Good News" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.