

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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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

The Plan to Stop Paul

Acts 23

- **Use dramatic lighting:** Dim the lights to represent night time, brighten them during the daytime scenes, and consider using a spotlight to represent Paul hearing God.
- **Dress the part:** Bring Bible times clothing and dress as a person from Paul's time. Tell the story as though it is something that happened recently, that you heard about or witnessed.

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
ADVENTURE!**

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

Tip: Be sensitive to kids who have difficult home lives or who may have experienced trauma.

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. As kids arrive, ask them about something hard that happened to them this week.

SAY • We all have to face difficult situations. Sometimes the difficult things we go through will confuse us, but we can always trust God through hard times. Today we'll learn about a man who went through some very difficult times and trusted God throughout. Who do you think it could have been?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Microscope Pictures" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Microscope Pictures" on the activity page. Kids will try to guess what the items are in the zoomed-in pictures.

SAY • Sometimes it's hard to tell what something is when all we see is a part of it. The same was true for Paul. He was only able to see a part of what God was doing in his life. But Paul trusted that God was in control. We'll hear more during our story today.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Scribble pictures

Ask the kids to sit in a circle, around a table if possible.

Provide each kid with a piece of paper and a pencil. Instruct the kids to make a quick squiggle or scribble shape on their paper, then pass it to their left. Each kid should now try to turn the scribble into a new picture of her own. Encourage kids to include the scribbled shape into their new drawings.

SAY • At first, it might have looked like we were ruining perfectly good paper by scribbling on it, but when you passed the paper each of you found a way to turn someone's mess into a new picture. Today we will learn about a man named Paul and hear what God did to make his life beautiful, even in the midst of messy situations.



- paper
- pencils or markers
- table (optional)

OPTION 2: Disagreement skits

Write on index cards scenarios where kids might disagree about something. (Examples: Your younger brother and you choose a movie to watch; You and a partner must choose a topic for a school project.) Form pairs of kids and give each pair a card. Encourage kids act out their scenarios.

- index cards
- markers

SAY • Sometimes people we care about disagree with us. Since everyone has different preferences, it's impossible to agree with everyone all the time. But how we disagree matters. We can still be kind and loving toward those who have different opinions than we do. Today we'll hear a story about Paul and how he wanted to share the gospel with people even when they disagreed with him.

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: Decorate the room to look like an uninhabited tropical island. Use foam board and green paper to make palm trees and place coconut shells around the room.

Countdown

- countdown video
- “The Big Story” video (optional)

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins. Since this is the beginning of a new quarter, you may show “The Big Story” video to help kids understand where this Bible story flows chronologically.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Large Group Leader enters carrying a Bible and wearing ragged clothing and a bandanna tied around his head. He looks very surprised to see the kids.]

LEADER • Oh hi, everyone! My name is *[your name]*. How did you all get here? Are you castaways on this island too? I thought I was the only one here. My ship sank in the ocean, and I washed up on this little island here. I had nothing but the clothes on my back and the Bible in my hands. Now I’m just waiting for

another ship to pass by and rescue me. I hope I don't have to wait too long! It's been really hard being on this island all by myself. I've had to catch fish for every meal and collect water in big seashells to drink out of. [*Wipe sweat off your forehead.*]

Plus it's been super hot in the sun! Thankfully God has sustained me and kept me going, even when I thought all hope was lost. And now I've found all of you! I was so excited to read a Bible story today and now I have lots of new friends to share it with. Do you want to hear it?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Have you ever had to do something really hard?

The man we're going to learn about for the next few weeks had to do some really hard things too for a very good purpose. God called him to tell people about Jesus. As we listen to the story we'll try to answer our big picture question: ***When should we tell others about Jesus?***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • Over the next few weeks, we're going to learn about God's plan for a believer named Paul. Paul lived at the same time as Jesus, and he had been a Pharisee, one of the religious leaders of the day. At first he hated Christians and wanted to throw them all in prison! But one day, after Jesus had been raised from the dead and went into heaven, Jesus met Paul on the road. Paul became a Christian, and from then on Paul wanted to tell as many people as he could

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

about Jesus! We can read all about God's plan for Paul in the Book of Acts in the New Testament.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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

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 • *When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.* Have you ever told someone something he or she didn't want to hear? [*Invite kids to respond.*] It isn't always easy to speak the truth to others, but it is definitely important.

Our friend Paul had important news that he shared with everyone he met. Not everyone wanted to hear what Paul had to say about Jesus. Some people didn't believe that Jesus is really God's Son—especially the religious leaders. They were also afraid that if people started following Jesus, the religious leaders would no longer have power among the people. The religious leaders wanted to stop anyone who taught about Jesus. That's why they wanted to kill Paul!

But God had other plans for Paul's life, and no one can stop God's plans! **When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.** Paul might have been scared, but God encouraged him even while he was in prison. God told Paul that he would go to Rome to preach the gospel to the people there. God reminded Paul that even in the midst of difficult times, He was in control. Paul trusted God's plans for him.

Christ connection

LEADER • Even when others threatened his life, Paul knew that God is faithful. He trusted 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. Even when difficult times come, we know that God can work all things according to His will. He is always in control and He will use difficult times to grow His kingdom.

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.

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

LEADER • Paul wanted to honor Christ above everything else. Making Jesus known was even more important to Paul than his own life! He knew that there's nothing better than knowing Jesus and having a relationship with Him, and Paul wanted to share this news with others. Work on memorizing the key passage over the next few weeks!

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

- Key Passage Poster
- "My Eager Expectation" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • How do you feel when you imagine telling a friend about Jesus? Think about that as you watch this video.

Show the "Unit 34, Session 1" discussion starter video. Discuss the risks Ethan faced for sharing Jesus with people. How did his friends react? Do we face similar risks for telling our friends about Jesus? Why do we tell people about

- "Unit 34, Session 1" discussion starter video

Jesus if there are risks involved?

LEADER • God is all-powerful, sovereign, and good. People may dislike us or make fun of us for loving Jesus, but we know that obeying Jesus is worth the risk. In our story today, **when Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.** The Roman soldiers who protected Paul probably did not know Jesus, but God used them anyway.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Unstoppable Victory”
song

LEADER • We can do hard things because God gives us strength. He doesn’t promise us that our lives will always be easy, but He does promise to be with us always. Let’s stand together to worship our God who is always there for us. God’s victory is guaranteed. Nothing can stop Him!

Sing together “Unstoppable Victory.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for Your great faithfulness to us, even when we do not deserve it. Thank You for promising to always be with us and for giving us strength and courage to do difficult things. Help us share the gospel with our friends and family this week. 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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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
- ball

Post the key passage poster and review it a few times with the kids. You may leave it up for the kids to reference during the game if needed. Instruct the kids to form a large circle. Toss a ball to one kid and guide him to say the first word in the key passage. He will then toss the ball to another kid for the second word. Continue this way until they have recited the whole passage.

SAY • In our story we learned that Paul wanted to share the good news of Jesus with people, even if it meant he would be hurt or killed. There's nothing more important than knowing Christ! Let's keep working on memorizing our key passage this week!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- tape

Provide Bibles and help kids to find Acts 23 in their Bibles. Review the different people in the Bible story by reading descriptive clues and allowing the kids to guess who the clue is about.

Clue #1: I taught people about Jesus wherever I went.
I spoke in front of the religious leaders who wanted to kill me. (*Paul*)

Clue #2: I overheard the Jews plotting to kill Paul so I told the commander of the army to protect him. (*Paul's nephew*)

Clue #3: I told Paul to have courage because I wanted him to teach about Jesus to people in Rome. (*God*)

Clue #4: We are a group of people who wanted to kill Paul. He stood before us telling us about Jesus, but we don't believe that Jesus is really God's own Son. (*the Sanhedrin, or religious leaders*)

Tape a long piece of masking tape down the middle of the room. Instruct the kids to stand on the line. Explain that you will read statements about the story. If the statement is true the kids will run to one side of the room, and if false they will run to the other side.

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

1. The story of Paul was from the Book of Luke (*false, the Book Acts*)
2. Paul wanted to share the gospel with as many people as possible. (*true*)
3. Paul stood before the Sanhedrin to give a testimony. (*true, Acts 23:1*)
4. The religious leaders agreed with what Paul said. (*False, they started a riot; Acts 23:10*)
5. A group of 40 Jews vowed not to go swimming until they had killed Paul. (*False, they vowed not to eat or drink; Acts 23:12-13*)
6. Paul's niece heard about a plot to kill Paul and told the commander. (*false, Paul's nephew; Acts 23:16*)
7. The army commander sent a large group of soldiers to escort Paul to Caesarea to see the governor. (*true, Acts 23:23-24*)
8. God protected Paul so he could tell people how to

follow God's laws. (*false, so he could preach about Jesus*)

9. We can share the good news of Jesus even when it's difficult. (*true*)

SAY • *When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.* God was with Paul and protected him because God wanted him to continue preaching about Jesus.



Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Triangle tag

Form groups of four kids. Three of the four kids in each group will hold hands while the fourth kid (*It*) stands on the outside of that group. The groups will choose one of the three remaining kids to be the target. The goal is for *It* to try to tag the target, but kids holding hands with the target will rotate around to protect him. *It* cannot reach through the circle, and the circle can only rotate, not move around the room.

SAY • Just like in our game Paul needed help to escape from the people who wanted to kill him. God had a plan for Paul's life, so **when Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.**

OPTION 2: Share the gospel roleplay

Invite kids to form groups of two or three. Explain that in each group, kids will take turns practicing sharing the gospel. The remaining kids in each group can choose to ask questions about the message.

After each kid has had a chance to explain the gospel to other kids, encourage the kids to think of a friend they

- adhesive name tags (optional)
- markers (optional)

Tip: Use "The Gospel: God's Plan for Me" to review the gospel with kids.

know who needs to hear about Jesus. Encourage kids to pray for their friends and to share the gospel with them this week. You may provide adhesive name tags for kids to write the name of a friend whom they are praying for. Encourage kids to stick the name tag somewhere they will see it daily.

SAY • Paul risked a lot by talking about Jesus. The religious leaders wanted to kill him! Paul never stopped talking about Jesus, though. **When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.**

Sharing the gospel can be a little scary. We can't predict who will accept it and who will reject it. Practicing what you will say and preparing to answer questions is a great way to be prepared to talk about Jesus. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.***

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring 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.