

Paul Before Rulers

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 24:22-27; 25:1-14; 26:24-32

MAIN POINT: Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.

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

Paul was in custody in Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province of Judea. The Jewish leaders had brought serious charges against him, so Paul now stood before Felix, the governor. Felix listened to Paul's defense but delayed a ruling. He met with Paul off and on for two years. When his time as governor ended, Felix left Paul in prison because he did not want to upset the Jews.

Festus succeeded Felix as governor. The Jews presented their accusations against Paul and asked Festus to bring him to Jerusalem. They hoped to ambush Paul as he traveled and kill him. But Festus invited Paul's accusers to make their case in Caesarea. When Festus heard Paul's case, he asked

if Paul wanted to be tried in Jerusalem. Paul, knowing his rights as a Roman citizen, appealed to be heard by Caesar.

Several days later, King Agrippa visited Festus and heard about Paul. He asked to listen to Paul's defense himself. Festus wasn't sure how he would justify his sending Paul to Caesar without substantiated charges, and he hoped this hearing would provide stronger evidence against Paul. Agrippa told Paul he was out of his mind, but determined Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

With these events, Paul was positioned to go to Rome, just as God had said he would. (See Acts 19:21; 23:11.) God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. (See Acts 9:15-16.) Paul was confident that Jesus has the power to save people from sin, and he was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel.

As you teach kids, prompt them to consider how Paul might have felt as he spoke before rulers and remained in custody for two years. Lead them to consider how God was at work to keep His promises.



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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** Hold up a separate crown for each ruler as Paul meets with him. Help kids visualize Paul's meeting with three rulers: Governor Felix, Governor Festus, and King Agrippa.
- **Display a map:** Point to the locations from the story on a Bible times map (Caesarea, Jerusalem, Rome).

Paul Before Rulers

Acts 24:22-27; 25:1-14; 26:24-32

Paul had narrowly escaped death in Jerusalem. The Jews planned to kill Paul, but the Roman soldiers took him away to Caesarea, where he would be safe. However, Paul was still a prisoner. The Roman leaders wanted to figure out why the Jews hated Paul so much. So Paul met with rulers to try to explain what was going on.

First, Paul met with Felix the governor. Felix knew what Paul believed about Jesus, and he agreed to listen to him. Felix ordered the Roman guard to watch Paul but to also give him some freedom by letting Paul's friends come and serve him.

A few days later, Felix and his wife came for a meeting with Paul. **Paul talked about faith in Jesus. He talked about righteousness and self-control, and he explained that one day God is going to judge the world. Felix was afraid of what Paul said. He sent Paul away, but he met with him many times for the next two years. When a new governor came into power, Felix did not release Paul from prison.**

The new governor was named Festus. He traveled to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders asked Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They were still planning to attack Paul and kill him. But Festus wanted Paul to stay in Caesarea. He invited some of the Jewish leaders to go with him to see Paul.

Paul stood before Festus. "I have not done anything wrong," Paul explained again. "If I have done something that deserves death, then I will die. But these men can prove nothing. I want to see Caesar!" Caesar was the emperor of

Rome, and as a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to take his case to him. **Festus agreed.**

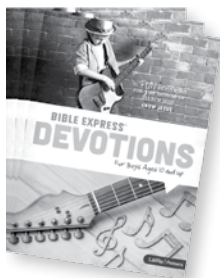
While Paul was waiting to go to Rome, King Agrippa and Queen Bernice visited Festus and Paul. Paul told the king how he became a believer. He explained that Jesus died to bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles.

“Paul, you are out of your mind!” Festus said.

“No,” Paul said. “I am speaking the truth. I wish you—and everyone who is listening—might believe in Jesus.”

King Agrippa, Festus, and the others with them got up. They agreed that Paul had done nothing wrong. The king was ready to free Paul, but Paul had already asked to go to Rome.

Christ Connection: God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. (Acts 9:15-16) Paul met with people again and again to tell the good news about Jesus. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Because Jesus has the power to save people from sin, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel.



**WANT TO
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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: Paul Before Rulers

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 24:22-27; 25:1-14; 26:24-32

MAIN POINT: Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.

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. Prompt kids to share if they have ever met someone famous and how they felt when they met that person.

SAY • Some of us have met famous people—musicians, politicians, athletes, or even actors. Sometimes when we meet people who are famous or powerful, we feel excited or nervous. We will learn today that even while Paul was a prisoner, he boldly spoke about Jesus to the religious leaders, governors, and kings. Their position of power didn't intimidate Paul because he believed that God is the most powerful.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “A Message for Everyone” on the activity page. Kids should follow each letter's path to the connecting number and fill in the corresponding blanks.

SAY • What message did Paul want everyone to believe?
(*Jesus is Lord.*)

- “A Message for Everyone” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Defend your point

Form two groups of kids. Give the first group a point to defend. (Examples: *Football is the greatest sport* or *hot dogs are better than hamburgers*.) Challenge the second group to try to break down the argument that the first group is trying to defend. With each claim from the second group, the first group should defend its point.

SAY • The more you know about something, the easier it is to defend it. If you don't know a lot about football, it's hard to argue that it's the greatest sport.

In the Bible story we will hear today, Paul defended the gospel before important rulers. Paul knew Jesus; Jesus had changed his life. Think about how well you know Jesus and the Bible. Could you defend the truth before people who are against it? Think about that as you hear about Paul's experience.

OPTION 2: Introduce friends

Instruct kids to form pairs. Distribute sticky notes and pencils. Give partners a minute or two to tell each other about themselves. Partners may take notes on sticky notes.

Then invite kids take turns introducing their partner to the rest of the group. Suggest kids share their partner's name, age, and favorite hobby.

SAY • Thank you for those introductions! Talking about someone else is easier if you know that person well. The apostle Paul loved Jesus and dedicated his life to telling others about him. Today we will hear about a time he told some important rulers about Jesus.



LOW PREP

Tip: Make sure kids are respectful in defending their points.

- sticky notes
- pencils

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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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

• journal

• sunscreen

• broken paper crown

[Leader enters carrying a journal and wearing white sunscreen on his or her nose. Leader is also carrying a broken crown. He or she is trying to put it back together but can't make it happen.]

LEADER • Hi, everyone! It's so good to see you. I haven't had anyone to talk to in days on this island, and I have something pretty cool to share. *[Hold up the broken crown.]* Look what I found! It looks like a crown, but it's broken. I wonder what ruler wore this on his head? *[Speak dramatically.]* I wonder if he landed here on this island and left this as a treasure when he was rescued!

[Focus back on the kids.] Oh, sorry. My imagination gets away from me when I don't have anyone to talk to for a while. *[Hold up the journal.]* So when I found this crown, I drew a picture of it in my journal. And that got me thinking about Paul. Remember, we

talked about him last week. Well, today you will hear that even men with crowns couldn't keep Paul from sharing the good news of Jesus.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • We know that Paul was faithful in sharing Jesus. Now is a great time to answer our big picture question: ***When should we tell others about Jesus?*** [Allow kids to recall the answer from last week.] ***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 to previous stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

LEADER • Last week, we learned that Paul was arrested for telling people about Jesus. Paul had dedicated his life to sharing the message of the Bible, that God saves sinners through His Son, Jesus. **When Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.**

Paul was in prison for a long time! During that time, he met with some important leaders. Today's Bible story is about what he told them. It's time to hear about "Paul Before Rulers."

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 24:22-27; 25:1-14; 26:24-32. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Paul Before Rulers."

• Bibles
• "Paul Before Rulers"
video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

LEADER • **Paul preached about Jesus to governors and**

kings. We heard about three main leaders here. First was Felix, the governor of Judea. Judea was an area controlled by the Romans. For two years, Felix met with Paul, but he never decided if Paul was guilty of a crime or not. When Felix's time as governor was over, Felix did not let Paul go free. He left Paul in prison!

The next governor of Judea was named Festus. The Jews wanted Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem so they could kill him. Instead, Festus went to visit Paul. Paul asked to be taken to Caesar, the emperor. Since Paul was a Roman citizen accused of a crime, it was his right to stand before Caesar.

Then Paul met with a third leader, King Agrippa. Paul explained to the king why he had been arrested, and Paul told him about Jesus. King Agrippa thought Paul was crazy, but he agreed that Paul was not a criminal. King Agrippa was ready to set Paul free, but since Paul wanted to go to Caesar, the king was responsible to get him there.

So Paul got ready to go to Rome. God had told Paul in a dream that he would go to Rome. [See Acts 19:21; 23:11.] Now God was keeping His promise in an unexpected way. Paul believed the gospel, and he wanted to tell everyone about Jesus. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.***

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.

Christ connection

LEADER • Paul knew that Jesus is the true ruler of all. God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. Paul met with people again and

again to tell the good news about Jesus. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Because Jesus has the power to save people from sin, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel.

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

LEADER • Paul boldly told the rulers that if he had done anything wrong they would be right to kill him, but he had not broken any laws. Paul believed that even in death, Jesus is worth any suffering he might face. Lead boys and girls in singing “My Eager Expectation.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “My Eager Expectation” song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Think about a time you needed to do something that required planning. Did it work out just like you planned? Watch this short video.

- “Unit 34, Session 2” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 34, Session 2” discussion starter video.

Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- Did Nigel keep his promise to feed the dog in the way you expected? What surprised you?
- In our Bible story, God kept His promise that Paul would speak to rulers and kings. Did God make that happen in a way you expected?
- What is God’s plan for us? How do you expect that to happen?

LEADER • God often works in ways we do not expect. We can be faithful and obedient to Him, trusting Him to work out everything so the gospel will spread—for our joy and His glory. Let’s say 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.

• “Unstoppable Victory”
song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Because Paul knew the power of Jesus, he was willing to do anything for Him. As we worship together in song, think about how mighty and powerful Jesus is.

Sing together “Unstoppable Victory.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, we see by Paul’s example that You are truly the most valuable prize. You are more wonderful and powerful than we will ever truly understand. Help us share the love of Jesus with everyone we meet. 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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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
- strips of paper
- marker
- tape

Before the session, write the words of the key passage on separate strips of paper. Display the key passage poster and lead kids to read Philippians 1:20-21 together.

Distribute the prepared word strips and challenge the kids to put the words in order by connecting the strips to make a chain. After kids complete the chain, say the key passage together.

SAY • It didn't matter if Paul was a prisoner or a free man; he believed in the power of Jesus with all his heart. He was willing to do whatever he could to share the life-changing gospel with others.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- paper
- pencils or markers

Give each kid a sheet of paper. On one side, kids should write *true* and on the other side they should write *false*. Guide them to line up on one side of the room and explain that they are all in "jail."

Ask a series of true/false questions. Wait for kids to hold up *true* or *false* before you reveal the answer. Kids who answer correctly may take a step forward toward "freedom." Kids who answer incorrectly may not move forward. Let

kids correct false answers to take another step forward.
Provide Bibles for kids to find supporting references.

1. The first governor Paul met with was named Felix. (*true, Acts 24:22*)
2. Felix would not listen to Paul. (*False, Felix listened many times; Acts 24:24,26*)
3. When Felix and his wife heard what Paul had to share about Jesus and judgment, they laughed at Paul. (*False, Felix was afraid; Acts 24:25*)
4. The new governor's name was Felix II. (*False, his name was Festus; Acts 24:27*)
5. The Jews wanted Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem so they could kill him. (*true, Acts 25:2-3*)
6. Paul asked to be brought before King Herod to hear his case. (*False, he appealed to Caesar; Acts 25:11*)
7. Paul hoped that everyone listening might believe in Jesus. (*true, Acts 26:29*)
8. Paul would only do the easy things to share the gospel. (*False, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel; Acts 26:29*)
9. Our key passage is found in the Book of Philemon. (*False, it is found in Philippians; Phil. 1:20-21*)

SAY • Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.

God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. (Acts 9:15-16)

Paul wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Because Jesus has the power to save people from sin, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel. Say our big picture question and answer with me: ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.***

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Jail tag

Choose one child to be *It* and then another child to be *Paul*. When *It* tags someone, the tagged player must visit *Paul* in a part of the room designated as “jail.” To free the person in jail, *Paul* must share the five points of “The Gospel God’s Plan for Me”: God rules, we sinned, God provided, Jesus gives, we respond.

Once the tagged player has heard these points from Paul, she becomes *Paul*, and the player who shared the gospel is free to join the game. Rotate players so multiple kids are *It* and also play the role of Paul.

SAY • Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.

In this game, you heard the gospel from Paul and were freed from jail. In real life, the gospel frees us from something greater than jail. Jesus sets us free from the power of sin and death. Jesus alone has the power to save people from sin, and Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel.

OPTION 2: Paper bag puppets

Provide paper bags and art supplies for kids to create paper bag puppets of people from today’s Bible story: Paul, Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Before kids begin, review each person:

- *Paul*—missionary arrested for preaching the gospel
- *Felix*—governor of Judea while Paul was in prison for two years
- *Festus*—governor of Judea who granted Paul’s request to see Caesar
- *King Agrippa*—told Paul he was out of his mind

Suggest that kids use markers and plastic wiggly eyes to

- paper lunch bags,
1 per kid
- markers
- construction paper
- plastic wiggly eyes
- yarn
- glue sticks
- craft glue
- scissors

create faces on their paper bags. Kids can cut construction paper to make clothes and glue yarn for hair. If time allows, invite kids to use their paper bags to say the main point. Form groups based on the person represented by the paper bags. Each group can say the main point together.

SAY • Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings, just as Jesus said he would do. The leaders listened to Paul, but Paul remained in prison for years. When we hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe it, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. We will enjoy Him forever.

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, asking God to give kids courage to tell others about Jesus even when it is hard. Pray that boys and girls would rely on God's strength as they seek to trust Him and obey Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Make a Plan" on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Make a Plan" 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.