

Paul Before Rulers

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

MAIN POINT: Paul preached about Jesus to rulers.

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.

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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 preschoolers, 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:** Gather props to represent each character in the story: a paper chain for Paul, sashes for Felix and Festus, paper crown or scepter for Agrippa, badge for jailer, and so forth. Invite a volunteer to wear the prop as each person is mentioned in the story, or the storyteller can wear props and change as the story progresses.

• **Move around:** Identify four locations within the storytelling area: 1) jail; 2) meeting place with Felix and his wife; 3) meeting place with Festus; 4) meeting place with King Agrippa and queen. Move to each location at the appropriate moment in the Bible story.

Paul Before Rulers

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

Paul was in prison, but he was safe for now. A group of Jews in Jerusalem had tried to hurt him, and the Roman soldiers took him away to meet with **important leaders**. The leaders **wanted to figure out** what was going on and **why people were upset with Paul**.

First, Paul met with Felix, the governor. Felix already knew what Paul believed, but he agreed to listen to him. Felix told the jail guards to let Paul's friends visit him. Then, a few days later, **Felix asked Paul to come speak to him and his wife. Paul talked about faith in Jesus.** He told them about being right with God and having self-control. Paul said that one day God is going to judge the world.

Felix was afraid of what Paul said. He sent Paul away. For two years, Paul stayed in prison and sometimes met with Felix to talk. But Felix did not let Paul go free.

Then a new governor came, and his name was Festus. Festus met with Paul and Paul said, "I have not done anything wrong. I want to see Caesar!" Caesar was the emperor of Rome. As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to take his case to him. Festus agreed.

Before Paul went to Rome, Agrippa—king of Judea—and the queen came to visit. Paul told the king about how he became a believer. He told the king that Jesus died to bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles.

"Paul, you are crazy!" the king said.

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

The king and other leaders got up. They did not think

Paul had done anything wrong. The king was ready to let Paul go, but Paul had asked to go to Rome, so they had to send him there.

Christ Connection: God chose Paul to tell all kinds of people—even kings!—about Jesus. Even when people were against him, Paul did not stop. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Paul believed Jesus has the power to save people from sin, and he was willing to do anything to share this good news.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
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MORE!**

Invite preschoolers 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

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KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.

Welcome time

- “Don’t Stop” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Paul Preached to Leaders” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Invite preschoolers to use a pencil, crayon, or a finger to trace the lines between Paul and different rulers.

SAY • Good job tracing the lines! In today’s Bible story, Paul was not able to preach about Jesus to large crowds of people, but that did not stop Him from sharing the good news. Paul told all kinds of people about Jesus. He told everyone—even kings—that only Jesus has the power to save people from sin.

Play a movement game

Encourage preschoolers to march like a soldier, salute like a commander, stand like a guard, walk like a king, wave like a queen, and so forth. Invite children to take turns leading the group.

SAY • When Paul was in prison, he saw soldiers and guards. He was also taken to talk to rulers and kings. The leaders wanted to learn whether Paul had done anything wrong. God chose Paul to tell all kinds of people about Jesus.



Experiment with locks

Provide padlocks with keys. Place corresponding colored dot stickers on each lock and its matching key. Invite children to work with the locks, taking care that they do not pinch their fingers.

SAY • Paul was a prisoner and may have been in a locked room. The leaders wanted to figure out why people were upset with Paul. Paul was able to tell the leaders, rulers, and kings that Jesus is Lord. **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers**, even though he was a prisoner.

- padlocks with keys
- dot stickers

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to march like a soldier as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

Teach THE STORY

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Introduce the Bible story

Suggested statements:

- The sky is green.
- Fish swim in the ocean.
- Chocolate milk comes from chocolate cows.
- Grass is green.
- Eating candy will make you strong.

Make several statements, some truthful and some untruthful. Instruct boys and girls to give a thumbs-up if they believe the statement is true and thumbs-down if the statement is not true.

SAY • Paul was taken before rulers who wanted to figure out why people were upset with him. Paul told the leaders he was telling the truth about Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- “Paul Before Rulers” video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Place a bookmark at Acts 24 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • The Bible is the most special book because it tells us the good news of Jesus. The stories we read in the Bible are true. Today’s story is from the Book of Acts.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

SAY • **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers.** Even when people were against him, Paul did not stop. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Paul

believed Jesus has the power to save people from sin, and he was willing to do anything to share this good news.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Why was Paul in prison? (*for preaching about Jesus*)
2. Name some of the rulers Paul talked to. (*Felix and his wife, Festus, King Agrippa and Bernice*)
3. Whom did Paul say he wanted to see? (*Caesar, the emperor of Rome*)
4. What did Paul want all the rulers to believe? (*that Jesus is Lord and has the power to save people from sin*)
5. Did the leaders think that Paul had done anything wrong? (*No, so they sent Paul to Rome.*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Even when people were against him, Paul did not stop telling the good news about Jesus. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.*** We should tell others about Jesus too so that they can be saved from sin.

• Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Philippians 1:21. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, “To Live Is Christ.”

SAY • Paul was not afraid to tell anyone about Jesus—even kings. He was willing to do anything to share the gospel. Paul knew that if he died, he would be with Jesus. With Jesus is the best place anyone can be.

• Key Passage Poster
• “To Live Is Christ” song

Transition to experience the story

Experience THE STORY

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Play “Follow the Leader”

Form a single-file line. The first child in line is the leader. Preschoolers must follow the leader around the room imitating his actions. After a short amount of time, tell the leader to move to the back of the line. The person in the front of the line is the new leader. Continue play as time allows.

SAY • *Leader* is another word for ruler. Leaders, or rulers, are people in charge. **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers** in our Bible story today. He hoped they would turn from their sin and believe the truth about Jesus. Paul believed Jesus has the power to save people from sin, and he was willing to do anything to share this good news.

Make chain paintings

Display the materials and put on painting smocks. Pour washable paint onto plates. Demonstrate how to dip the ends of the cardboard tube into paint and press it onto a sheet of paper. Continue painting interlocking circles to resemble links of a chain. Print the main point on each child's painting.

SAY • Paul spent many years in prison, and he was willing

- painting smocks
- washable paint
- paper
- foam plates
- cardboard tubes
- markers

to do anything to share the good news of Jesus. The leaders allowed his friends to visit him. Paul was thankful for his time in prison because **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers** like Governor Felix and King Agrippa.

Play a life-sized board game

Mark the key passage in a Bible with a bookmark. Print start and end on sheets of construction paper. Write additional instructions on separate sheets of paper, such as *skip a space, say the main point, open the Bible to the key passage, answer the big picture question, and tell something you remember about the Bible story*. Tape the papers to the floor in a pattern to create a game board, adding extra sheets of paper in random intervals to be blank spaces. You may use also the Giant Game Floor Mat.

Invite a child to toss a numbered cube and move along the path that many spaces. If the space is blank, proceed to the next player. If the space has instructions, read the instructions to the child and help her complete the task. Focus on saying the key passage, main point, and big picture question and answer.

SAY • The Bible teaches us many things. We can read that God chose Paul to tell all kinds of people—even rulers—that Jesus has the power to save people from sin. God chooses us to tell all kinds of people about Jesus too. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.***

Create a friend collage

Tape paper on the wall at the children's eye level. Provide art supplies and encourage children to work with their

- construction paper
- markers
- Giant Game Floor Mat (optional)
- numbered cube
- Bible
- bookmark
- tape

- tape
- large sheet of paper
- crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- shape cutouts (optional)
- glue (optional)
- stickers (optional)

friends to create a mural. Suggest a child draw herself telling someone about Jesus. Preschoolers may also glue shape cutouts or stick stickers to the mural. Encourage the preschoolers to be creative as they work together.

SAY • Paul was in prison for a long time, and he was only able to see his friends after Governor Felix told the jail guards to let them visit. Even though he was in prison, Paul continued to tell people about Jesus. **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers** and leaders he met.

Knock down bottles

- index card or adhesive mailing labels
- tape (optional)
- marker
- empty plastic bottles
- ball

Print each word of the key passage onto an index card or adhesive mailing label, and attach the word to an empty plastic bottle. Read the key passage as you set up the bottles in a row. Guide preschoolers to roll a ball toward the bottles to knock them down. After a child has a turn, say the key passage as you set up the bottles again. Encourage preschoolers to say it with you as they start to memorize it.

SAY • Paul knew that being with Jesus is far better than anything else. But while he was alive, Paul wanted to help other believers. **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers.** God chose Paul to tell all kinds of people about Jesus. Even when people were against him, Paul did not stop. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Paul believed Jesus has the power to save people from sin, and he was willing to do anything to share this good news.

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve pretzel sticks and miniature marshmallows for snack. Suggest a child create a king's scepter by placing a marshmallow on the end of a pretzel stick. Talk about how **Paul preached about Jesus to rulers** like King Agrippa and the queen.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw Paul telling a ruler about how much Jesus loves him. Mention that we can tell others about Jesus too. Ask the big picture question as a child creates. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.*** Invite children to repeat the big picture answer two or three times. Pray for the children.

SAY • God, thank You for giving Jesus power to save us from sin. Make us like Paul so we will believe the good news about Jesus and be willing to do anything to share it with others. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers