

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:** Bring props to represent different people or parts from the story. A crown could represent King Agrippa, a laurel wreath could represent the Roman governors, a cross can represent Jesus, and so forth.
- **Act it out:** Invite child volunteers to come on stage and act out the different people in the story. Encourage fun, exaggerated gestures.

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
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

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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. As kids arrive, ask them to share something fun or exciting that happened to them in the past week.

SAY • Everyone loves to tell good news. When something exciting happens to us, our first response is usually to tell someone else about it! The same is true when it comes to the good news about Jesus. Paul had encountered Jesus. It was the greatest thing that had ever happened to him, and he wanted to tell as many people about it as he could! We'll hear more during our story today.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Hidden Words" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Hidden Words" activity page. The kids will find and arrange the words of the main point.

SAY • Can you imagine getting to speak in front of a group of really important people? Would you be nervous or excited? Today we're going to hear the story of Paul's sharing the gospel in front of governors and kings.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Lock down

Form teams of three or four kids. Provide each group with paper and pencils. Invite the kids to design and draw a prison or jail house that would be impossible to escape from. Ask them questions about the different design features they have included.

SAY • A good jail should be impossible to escape from, but what would you do if you were arrested without having broken a law? What if you were arrested for teaching about Jesus? In our story today, we will learn about what happened to Paul while he was being held by the Romans. Do you think he tried to escape?



- paper
- pencils

OPTION 2: Pillow fort prison

Provide a variety of pillows and blankets and allow the kids to create a pillow fort prison. Let them take turns sitting in the fort.

- pillows
- blankets

SAY • Imagine being arrested and put in prison because you believe the truth about Jesus. In our story today, Paul was in prison because he taught people about Jesus. That sounds like bad news, but God used Paul's situation for good. Paul had opportunities to share the gospel with people who didn't know Jesus. Do you think Paul escaped from prison?

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
• coconut
• stick
• marker or crayon

[Large Group Leader enters wearing ragged clothing and a bandanna tied around his head. He is holding a stick with a coconut attached to the top. He has drawn a face on the coconut.]

LEADER • Boy, am I glad to see you guys today! I've been alone so long on this island that I thought meeting you last week was just a daydream. It's so great to have friends that talk back! *[Gesture to the coconut attached to a stick.]* My buddy here isn't much of a talker. And he doesn't really help much with chores around the island. *[Lower your voice as if sharing a secret.]* Between you and me, he's kind of a nut! And he certainly isn't a substitute for real people friends.

That's why I'm glad you are here again. Other than needing some company and friendly conversation, I'm also glad to see you because I have another Bible story to share with you.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember that last week we answered our big picture question, *when should we tell others about Jesus?* Do you remember the answer? [*Invite kids to respond.*] ***We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.*** Why do you think that is a question Christians need to remember? [*Invite kids to respond.*] Jesus told His followers that living for Him was not going to be easy. Our mission as Jesus' followers is to tell people about Him, but that doesn't mean people always want to hear the good news.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • That brings us back to God's plan for Paul. Last week we learned how Paul faced off with the religious leaders in the Sanhedrin. The Jews disagreed so strongly with Paul's message about Jesus that they wanted to kill him!

Thankfully even **when Paul was arrested, God protected him so he could preach about Jesus.** God was using Paul's difficult circumstances for His glory. Paul was taken to Caesarea to see the Roman governor. That's where our story picks up today in the Book of Acts. It's called "Paul Before Rulers."

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

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 • I don't know about you, but if I were put in prison for telling people about Jesus, it would be really tempting to stay quiet awhile. I would want to be pretty certain that the people I told about Jesus were on my side. But not Paul. Paul knew that God had called him to tell people about Jesus no matter who they were or what kind of power they had. **Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.**

Even though Paul was a prisoner, God made a way for him to share the gospel with people. The news that Jesus came to rescue us is too good to keep quiet. Paul wanted everyone to know about Jesus! It's funny to think that Paul was telling people about having freedom in Christ when he himself was in chains. But when Paul talked about freedom, he meant that Jesus sets us free from our sin. Jesus invites us into God's kingdom and gives us eternal life! Paul knew that he was God's child, and he trusted God to take care of him.

After hearing Paul, the rulers agreed that he was not guilty and could be released, except that Paul had already asked to see Caesar. God's plan to send Paul to Rome was unfolding a little more.

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 • God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. (Acts 9:15-16) Even when people were against him, Paul continued to tell the good news about Jesus. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. 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.

We can tell people about Jesus too! Just as God had a plan for Paul and used even Paul's difficult times for His glory, God will use our difficult times too. We don't need to be afraid of the way people may react to us. We can trust that God is in control.

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

LEADER • Great job with our key passage this week. Paul knew that knowing Jesus was greater than anything else, even being set free from prison! Paul took every opportunity he could to tell people about the freedom we have in Christ and that even dying with Him is better than living without Him.

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 things don't turn out the way you plan? Consider that question as you watch this short video.

Show the "Unit 34, Session 2" discussion starter video.

Discuss how things turned out for Nigel. Ask the kids if Nigel's plans surprised them. Does God always keep His promises in the ways we expect Him to?

LEADER • God always keeps His promises. However, His plans are not always easy for us to understand. Many times, God will surprise us with the way He keeps His promises.

Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings because God allowed him to stay in prison.

- "Unit 34, Session 2" discussion starter video

The rulers that Paul faced were putting him on trial! God always works things together for His glory and our good, but sometimes what is best for us may not be what we think is best for us.

• “Unstoppable Victory”
song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • I love to hear stories of how God sustains and cares for His children just like Paul! He is a God worthy of our worship. Let’s stand and sing together now. No matter what happens to us, God’s victory is unstoppable!

Sing together “Unstoppable Victory.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for giving us Your Word and revealing Yourself to us through the pages of Scripture. We praise You because You are a God who uses people like us to bring glory to Your great name. We ask that You would give us opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with someone 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 activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- paper strips
- markers
- tape or stapler

Give each child several strips of paper (one strip per word of the key passage and reference). Display the key passage poster for kids to use as a guide. Instruct each kid to write one word of the passage on each strip of paper and then create a paper chain with the words in the correct order.

SAY • Our paper chains make me think of how Paul was in prison but he still wanted to preach about Jesus to everyone he could. You can hang up your paper chain somewhere so that every time you see it you can practice our key passage!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- paper
- marker

Provide Bibles and help kids find Acts 24:22-27; 25:1-14; 26:24-32. Remind kids that the Book of Acts is in the New Testament, and it tells of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of the apostles. Provide each kid with a sheet of paper labeled *FALSE* and a sheet of paper labeled *TRUE*. Designate one side of the room to be the "jail." Read the review statements for today's Bible story. For every correct answer, kids get to take one step away from the jail. If they answer incorrectly, they take one step back. For every false

statement, ask a volunteer to explain what would make the statement true.

1. Paul was a prisoner. (*true, Acts 24:23*)
2. Felix wouldn't allow anyone to visit Paul. (*False, Felix allowed Paul's friends to visit him; Acts 24:23*)
3. Felix never listened to what Paul said about Jesus. (*False, he listened to Paul and he was hoping Paul would give him money; Acts 24:26*)
4. Felix released Paul from prison. (*False, he left Paul in prison to make the Jews happy; Acts 24:27*)
5. Paul asked to be taken to Rome. (*true, Acts 25:10*)
6. Paul was too afraid to talk about Jesus in front of the kings and rulers. (*False, Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings.*)
7. *We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.* (*true*)

SAY • Great job, everyone! **Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings** even when it was difficult or scary. He knew that knowing Jesus is more important than anything else, and he wanted to share the gospel with everyone! Even when the rulers decided Paul could be released, Paul remained in prison because he asked to see Caesar. Paul trusted God's plans even through difficult times.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What would you say?

Display the gospel plan poster and read it together with your kids. Teach the kids the following hand motions to help them remember each part. Then practice going through the parts until the kids can say them on their own. You may encourage kids to say them louder, softer, or in

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

LOW PREP

• Gospel Plan Poster (optional)

different voices. Then see how quickly you can say each step while doing the motions.

- God rules [*Place hands in a circle over you, as though setting a crown on your head.*]
- We sinned [*Hold both arms in front of you making a large X with your forearms.*]
- God provided [*Turn your X into a cross by rotating your arms.*]
- Jesus gives [*Hold hands together in front of you as though handing someone a gift.*]
- We respond [*Raise both hands into the air in celebration and praise.*]

SAY • Sharing the gospel is not always easy, but it is simple. If you know these steps, you are ready to share the good news of Jesus with anyone! **Paul preached about Jesus to governors and kings**, as well as anyone else he met. The gospel is for everyone. We are all sinners in need of a Savior to rescue us. I encourage you to share the good news this week with someone who needs to hear it!

OPTION 2: JESUS banner

- large sheet of paper
- markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- tape

Write the name *JESUS* in large block letters on a large piece of paper. Invite the kids to write words or draw pictures describing Jesus or the things He did in the Bible or in their lives. Consider displaying the finished banner on the focal wall in the classroom or near the entrance to the kids ministry in your church.

SAY • [*Read John 21:25.*] We could fill up a million banners with all the amazing things Jesus has done for us. He is so full of grace and mercy and we can thank Him for all that He has done. He has saved us from our

sin and invited us into His eternal kingdom!

When we know how wonderful Jesus is and the wonderful things He has done for us, we begin to understand that sharing the gospel is worth whatever difficulties may come. We have hope in Jesus.

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.