
Forward

This book contains 32 lessons from the book of Acts. Your students will learn about the early Christians and how the Holy Spirit came to bring them power to live godly lives and to share Jesus with others. They will come to desire the strength of the Holy Spirit to say, “No” to sin. They will be encouraged to trust and rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit for comfort in times of trial. Finally, they will discover the power of prayer which will strengthen their faith and give them the proper perspective on the things that happen to them in life.

I have designed these lessons to enable you to teach the Bible expositionally. The idea is to have the kids read the passages in their own Bibles and the teacher explain the scriptures and give good practical applications that are age-appropriate. My goal is to ensure that children learn that God's Word is exciting and meaningful and that teachers teach sound doctrine!

Even though I've scripted the lessons, I don't expect teachers to read my lesson materials verbatim to the children as they teach. My lessons are meant to provide the details you need to get background information and some suggestions for child-oriented personal application. Once you know and understand the Bible lessons for yourself, you'll be ready to teach your class.

The two-column layout of this book is designed so that you can copy and cut the pages in half to fit into your Bible. When the children observe that you are teaching right out of the Bible, rather than from a curriculum book, it validates God's Word and gives your teaching more authority.

You will discover that there is not always a Craft or Game idea suggested in each lesson. When I've had a good idea that really seems to support the lesson objectives, I've included it. But I have another handbook called *Tips and Tricks — Making Children's Bible Lessons Come to Life* that gives lots of suggestions for activities that

will help reinforce your lesson and teach the memory verse. (This is available from my website:

<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/>)

Use the Teaching Schedule to help you organize your teaching rotation.

I pray that you will use these lessons for God's glory by teaching the Bible as an entire plan by a systematic and connected study of the Word.

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:14)

Sheila Scroggins

Sheila has had over 35 years' experience in teaching children and has several other lesson series available. You may contact her by eMail at: ccuv-ChildrensMinistry@usa.net for more information.

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: Jesus Ascends to Heaven (Acts 1:3-11)..... 1

Lesson 2: God Gives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-21) 5

Lesson 3: A Lame Man is Healed (Acts 3:1-19)..... 11

Lesson 4: The Spirit Gives Boldness (Acts 4:1-31) 15

Lesson 5: Ananias and Sapphira Lie to God (Acts 4:32 – 5:12)..... 21

Lesson 6: The Apostles are Persecuted (Acts 5:14-42) 27

Lesson 7: Seven Men are Chosen to Minister (Acts 6:1-7) 33

Lesson 8: Stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:8—7:60) 37

Lesson 9: Persecution Scatters the Church (Acts 8:1-25)..... 41

Lesson 10: Philip Preaches to the Ethiopian Man (Acts 8:26-40)..... 47

Lesson 11: Saul Becomes a Believer (Acts 9:1-22) 51

Lesson 12: Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Tabitha (Acts 9:32-43)57

Lesson 13: Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-22).....61

Lesson 14: Early Church Grows and Changes (Acts 11)65

Lesson 15: God Delivers Peter from Prison (Acts 12:1-19)69

Lesson 16: Holy Spirit Sends Barnabas and Saul Out (Acts 12:25—13:12)73

Lesson 17: Two Reactions to the Good News (Acts 13:13-52)77

Lesson 18: Paul and Barnabas Persevere (Acts 14).....83

Lesson 19: The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35).....89

Lesson 20: Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 15:40 — 16:15)95

Lesson 21: Paul and Silas Rejoice in Prison (Acts 16:16-40)..... 101

Lesson 22: Paul in Macedonia (Acts 17)..... 107

Lesson 23: Paul’s 3rd Missionary Journey (Acts 19:1-20) 111

Lesson 24: Riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-42) 115

Lesson 25: Paul’s Farewell Journey Begins (Acts 20) 119

Lesson 26: Paul Arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-36) 125

Lesson 27: Paul Testifies in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37 – 22:30)..... 131

Lesson 28: God Protects Paul’s Life (Acts 22:30—23:35)..... 135

Lesson 29: Paul’s Trial Before Felix (Acts 24) 141

Lesson 30: Paul’s Trial Before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25-26) 145

Lesson 31: Paul’s Shipwreck (Acts 27)..... 151

Lesson 32: Paul Arrives in Rome at Last (Acts 28) 157

Teaching Schedule

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Jesus Ascends to Heaven (Acts 1:3-11)	<i>And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when He returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from Him in shame. (1 John 2:28 NLT)</i>
		God Gives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-21)	<i>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)</i>
		A Lame Man is Healed (Acts 3:1-19)	<i>“Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes. (Acts 3:16 NLT)</i>
		The Spirit Gives Boldness (Acts 4:1-31)	<i>For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)</i>
		Ananias and Sapphira Lie to God (Acts 4:32 – 5:12)	<i>The righteous hate what is false. (Proverbs 13:5) And/or Surely You desire truth in the inner parts. (Psalm 51:6)</i>
		The Apostles are Persecuted (Acts 5:14-42)	<i>Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. (Matthew 5:11)</i>
		Seven Men are Chosen to Minister (Acts 6:1-7)	<i>As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)</i>

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:8—7:60)	<i>Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. (Luke 6:22)</i>
		Persecution Scatters the Church (Acts 8:1-25)	<i>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8 NLT)</i>
		Philip Preaches to the Ethiopian Man (Acts 8:26-40)	<i>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)</i>
		Saul Becomes a Believer (Acts 9:1-22)	<i>God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)</i>
		Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Tabitha (Acts 9:32-43)	<i>God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Peter 4:10)</i>
		Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-22)	<i>Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. (Acts 10:34-35 NLT)</i>
		Early Church Growth and Change (Acts 11)	<i>And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)</i>
		God Delivers Peter from Prison (Acts 12:1-19)	<i>The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16 NIV)</i>

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Holy Spirit Sends Barnabas and Saul Out (Acts 12:25—13:12)	<i>For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)</i>
		Two Reactions to the Good News (Acts 13:13-52)	<i>And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. (Ephesians 6:19 NLT)</i>
		Paul and Barnabas Persevere (Acts 14)	<i>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2-3 ESV)</i>
		The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)	<i>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)</i>
		Paul's 2 nd Missionary Journey (Acts 15:40 — 16:15)	<i>He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:3b)</i> And/or <i>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. (Rom 8:14)</i>
		Paul and Silas Rejoice in Prison (Acts 16:16-40)	<i>Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)</i>
		Paul in Macedonia (Acts 17)	<i>And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 ESV)</i>

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Paul in Ephesus Paul's 3 rd Missionary Journey (Acts 19:1-20)	<i>Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)</i>
		Riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-42)	<i>"You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice. (Exodus 23:2)</i>
		Paul's Farewell Journey Begins (Acts 20)	<i>However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20:24 NIV)</i>
		Paul Arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-36)	<i>The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble? (Psalms 27:1)</i>
		Paul Testifies in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37 – 22:30)	<i>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 ESV)</i>
		God Protects Paul's Life (Acts 22:30—23:35)	<i>For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me. (Psalms 31:3 NKJ)</i>
		Paul's Trial Before Felix (Acts 24)	<i>I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. (Acts 24:16)</i> And/or <i>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)</i>

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Paul's Trial Before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25-26)	<i>Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. (Psalms 37:7)</i>
		Paul's Shipwreck (Acts 27)	For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear Him. (Psalms 34:7 NLT)
		Paul Arrives in Rome at Last (Acts 28)	<i>And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. (13) For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. (Philippians 1:12-13)</i>

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

(Acts 1:3-11)

Introduction

Today we are going to begin a new journey in our class. We are going to be traveling through the book of the Acts.

The word “Acts” means “deeds”, the things that people do. (You can “act out” or “act funny” or “act nice”.) The full title of the book of Acts is *The Acts of the Apostles* because this book is all about the things the apostles did to spread the Good News about Jesus.

Acts is like a bridge that connects the four Gospels with the rest of the New Testament.

The four Gospels tell us all about Jesus’ life on earth. The rest of the New Testament tells us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God. Acts tells us about how Jesus’ followers spread out from Jerusalem into the ends of the world telling people about Jesus.



One of the last things Jesus told His disciples is found at:

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (20) Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

We call this Jesus’ *Great Commission*. Acts tells us how the Apostles went out into the world making disciples and baptizing people and teaching them how to live their lives in a way that pleases God.

Acts was written by a man by the name of Luke. Luke also wrote one of the gospels. At one time the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were joined together as one book with two parts.

Luke wanted to record what the first followers of Jesus accomplished as they went into the world telling people about what Jesus did on the cross for them.

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning as we learn more about Your return to heaven, we will be excited to learn that You have promised to return. It is a thrill to think that Jesus is coming back to get us. I can’t wait to see Heaven! I know it must be such a wonderful place. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when He returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from Him in shame. (1 John 2:28 NLT)

Lesson

Jesus’ disciples spent three years following Him. They heard Him teach about God’s Kingdom and were with Him when He performed many miracles. When they saw Jesus nailed to a cross and die and watched them place His body in a sealed tomb, they believed He was dead and gone forever.

Jesus had told them very clearly before He was crucified that He was going to suffer and would rise again.

Mark 8:31

*Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man **must suffer** many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would **be killed**, but three days later he would **rise from the dead**.*

Even though the disciples had been told by Jesus what to expect, they were frightened and overwhelmed with grief when the things He had told them were happening. It would not have been easy for them to watch the innocent Son of God treated like a criminal and tortured and nailed to a cross.

But three days after Jesus was buried, their beloved Friend, the Lord Jesus, rose from the dead! There could be no doubt that He was alive!

And for the next 40 days, before He went back up to heaven, Jesus appeared at different times to His disciples.

Acts 1:3

*During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he **talked to them about the Kingdom of God.***

How did Jesus prove to His disciples that He was really alive? Who are some people that Jesus appeared to in His resurrected body? (2 men on their way to Emmaus, Thomas, Peter.)

For forty days, the disciples talked with Him and ate with Him. They saw the scars where the nails had held Him on the cross in His hands and feet.

Verse 3 tells us that during those 40 days, Jesus spoke to His disciples about the kingdom of God. It must have been so comforting to them to have Jesus with them again alive!

Then, Jesus gave His men a very important instruction.

Acts 1:4-5

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. (5) John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. Jesus wanted to prepare them for when He would leave them and return to heaven.

The apostles didn't fully understand what was about to happen; they were confused about what Jesus was talking about.

Acts 1:6-7

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” (7) He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.

The disciples were still hoping that Jesus was going to become their earthly king and free Israel from Roman power.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you. And you will be my **witnesses**, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Jesus was telling them that He was not going to set up His kingdom on earth now. He had to go back to the Father in heaven so that the Holy Spirit could come to **help** them and to **teach** them. [Teacher, to learn more about the Holy Spirit, look up John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-8, 13-15.]

Jesus was telling them that when He left to go back to Heaven, the Father was going to send the Holy Spirit who would give them the **power** they would need to do His will.

It is important to understand that there is only one God, but He is a three-part God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You can think of it like the corner of the ceiling: there is a wall, another wall, and a ceiling that make up one “corner”.

If Jesus had stayed on earth as a human, he could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be present everywhere because He is a spirit so He can help everyone all at the same time.

The Spirit gives us **comfort**, **guides** us into all truth, **reminds** us of God's word, **gives us the right words** to say to others, and fills us with the **power** to live our lives in a way that pleases God. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us the **courage** to say “No!” to sin, and “Yes!”

to God's way of thinking and acting. If you believe in Jesus, you have the power of the Holy Spirit in your life right now!

When Jesus finished telling them all these things, His feet lifted up off the ground and He began to ascend or go up into the sky. As He went up into the sky, a cloud hid Him from the apostle's sight.

Acts 1:9

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.

Imagine the disciple's shock when they saw Jesus going up into the clouds alive! Suddenly He was gone! Even though He had told them He was going, they didn't feel ready to see Him leave. Perhaps they had forgotten that He had promised to come back again.

Jesus will come back suddenly and without warning! It could be during your lifetime. It could be anytime. If you have asked Jesus to come into your life, you have become a child of God and someday you will live with Him forever in heaven!

Will you be glad to see Him when He returns? God wants us to stay in fellowship with Him so that when He comes, we will not be ashamed of ourselves. [Teacher, review the Memory Verse.]

What are some things you don't want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? [Teacher, let the kids discuss this topic: disobeying your dad, being rude to your mother, cheating in a game or on a test at school, being angry with your brother or sister, saying a bad word.]

Jesus could return at any time. When He does, will you be ready for His return? The disciples were amazed when they saw Jesus go up, think how surprising it will be when He comes back!

After the cloud hid Him from sight, the disciples stared at the sky.

Acts 1:10-11

As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. (11) "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are

you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Who do you think these two men were? (Angels)

Two angels appeared, standing right there beside them and told them Jesus will come back again from heaven in a cloud. Although no one except God knows when this will take place, we do know that God always keeps His promises.

I wonder how long the disciples would have stood there staring up into the sky if those two angels had not come along.

Each day remind yourself that today could be the day of His return! In everything you do, ask yourself, "*Is this what I want Jesus to find me doing when He comes back?*" When you are tempted to think or say or do anything that you know is not pleasing to the Lord, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to say, "*No!*"

Jesus is coming back and He wants us to be ready so that we'll be happy to see Him.

The apostles were going to miss having Jesus walk with them and talk with them, but they were obedient and went to Jerusalem to wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

Next week our lesson will be about when God sent His Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are coming soon. I want You to catch me doing something good. We want to be pleasing to You in everything that we think, say, and do. Help us to call upon the power of the Holy Spirit to say, "*No!*" to sin and to continue to live close to You every day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Cloud Cards: Prepare a cloud-shaped card for each student. On it print in large letters: “**Perhaps today!**” Add 1 John 2:28 in smaller print below the two words. This card could be small enough to be set up “tent style” on a table or large enough to hang on the wall. Encourage the children to use it each day as a reminder of Christ’s return so they will choose behavior that would please Him.

Ask-It-Basket

Write the review questions on separate pieces of paper. Wad them up into balls and put them in a decorated basket. Ask each child to choose a question to answer

Game Center

Use the following review questions in another game of your choice:

1. Who wrote the Book of Acts? (Luke)
2. How many days did Jesus walk on earth between His resurrection and His ascension? (Forty days.)
3. Who are some people that Jesus appeared to in His resurrected body? (2 men on their way to Emmaus, Thomas, Peter.)
4. What instructions did Jesus give His disciples before He returned to heaven? (Stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit.)
5. Why did the disciples ask Jesus, “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” (They still thought Jesus was going to become their king and free Israel from Roman power.)
6. What did Jesus tell the disciples they would receive when the Holy Spirit came? (Power to be His witnesses.)
7. Why were the apostles staring up at the sky? (They were straining to see Jesus)
8. How did the two men say Jesus would return? (In the same way you saw him go.)
9. What did the apostles do after Jesus returned to heaven? (They waited in Jerusalem for the promise, just as they were told.)
10. Explain the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (There is only one God, but He is three persons. Like the three states of water.)
11. Why was it necessary for Jesus to go back to the Father? (So the Holy Spirit could come. Because Jesus is physical, He could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be everywhere at once.)
12. Why is it good to have the power of the Holy Spirit? (He gives us courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority.)
13. How did Jesus go up into Heaven? (A cloud received Him out of their sight.)
14. When will Jesus come back? (Only God knows the exact time; but it could be any time.)
15. What do you want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? (Something good!)
16. What’s an important thing to remind yourself each day? (That this could be the day of His glorious appearing!)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

God Gives the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:1-42)

Introduction

[Teacher, before class wrap a gift box with a removable lid containing these objects: 2 flashlights (one without batteries), Bible, Family Picture, a Heart, and something to represent Prayer. To introduce the lesson, show the students the gift.]

We all love to receive gifts! Has there ever been a time in your life that you knew you were getting a gift you wanted but had to wait for it? [Allow students to share.]

Inside this box are gifts that God promises to give to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus. [Ask volunteers to come and take one thing from the gift box, then discuss how each object relates to gifts from God, saving the flashlights for last.]

Heart: Represents God's love and comfort for His children.

Bible: God's Word is a gift to His children because it tells us of His promises and instructions for life.

Family: It is a gift to be part of God's forever family and to be able to pray together and help each other.

Flashlight: [Have the two students who chose the flashlights turn them on. Discover that the one that did not come on does not have a battery.] The flashlight with batteries reminds us of another very important gift that God has given to believers. When we are saved, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He comes and lives in our hearts and gives each of us power to live a life that pleases God. A person who is not saved, has no power to live a life that pleases God.

[Put the items back in the gift box and put the lid on it.]

Opening Prayer

Father, we are so glad that you have sent us the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, our Helper in times of need. He gives us the power we need to live a life in victory over sin and He gives us the courage we need to tell others about Your love for us. Thank You that You have provided us with resurrection power — the same power that raised Jesus from the dead — through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you. And you will be my **witnesses**, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
(Acts 1:8)

Lesson

Last week we learned that right before He ascended back up to heaven, Jesus had told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father.

Acts 1:4-5

*Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "**Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised**, as I told you before. (5) John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

While Jesus was still on earth, He had told His disciples about the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26

*But when the Father sends the **Advocate** [Helper] as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will **teach** you everything and will **remind** you of everything I have told you.*

John 16:7-8

But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate [Helper] won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to

you. (8) *And when he comes, he will **convict the world of its sin**, and of God's **righteousness**, and of the coming **judgment**.*

John 16:13

*When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will **guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. **He will tell you about the future**.*

Jesus had clearly taught His followers about the Holy Spirit while He was still with them.

When we pick up the story today, the apostles were obeying Jesus' instructions. They were gathered together in Jerusalem anxiously waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise to send the Holy Spirit who would give them power to be witnesses for Him. [Review today's verse.]

It was now 50 days since Jesus' resurrection and 10 days since His ascension up to heaven.

There was a big celebration going on in Jerusalem called the "Day of Pentecost" or the *Feast of Harvest* (Leviticus 23:15-21). Like the American holiday of Thanksgiving, it is a festival of thanksgiving for the harvested crops and God's provision.

All Jewish men were required to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, so there were Jews from many different nations there in Jerusalem. The town was packed with people all speaking different languages: And when the day of Pentecost arrived, something amazing happened.

Acts 2:1-4

*On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. (2) Suddenly, there was **a sound** from heaven **like the roaring of a mighty windstorm**, and it filled the house where they were sitting. (3) Then, what looked like **flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them**. (4) And **everyone** present **was filled with the Holy Spirit** and began **speaking in other languages**, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

Ask:

- What did it sound like in the room that the believers were gathered in? (A sound like a violent wind.)
- What unusual sight happened in that room? (Tongues of Fire.)
- Who filled the believers? (The Holy Spirit.)
- What did the Holy Spirit cause them to do? (Speak in other languages.)

God made His presence known to this group of believers in a spectacular way — violent wind, fire, and His Holy Spirit. This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy at the time He baptized Jesus when he said that there was one coming who "*will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*" (Luke 3:16)

Then, the disciples began to speak in other languages.

Acts 2:5-8

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. (6) When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. (7) They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, (8) and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!

The noise caused the Jews visiting Jerusalem to come running to find out what was going on. All the foreigners in Jerusalem at that time were amazed to hear God being praised in their own native languages!

Acts 2:11

(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!"

They could hardly believe their ears! They wanted to know what was happening.

Acts 2:12

They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.

Some people made fun of the disciples, saying they were drunk.

Acts 2:13

But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

But Peter, now empowered by the Holy Spirit, explained...

Acts 2:14-15

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. (15) These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that.

Here is Peter who only 50 days earlier had been a coward and deserted the Lord Jesus in His deepest hour of need. Peter who had denied that he even knew the Lord, was now speaking boldly to the crowd, unashamed!

Acts 2:22-24

"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. (23) But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. (24) But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

Peter, given boldness by the Holy Spirit, told the crowd, "When you saw Jesus doing all those powerful miracles, you knew He was the promised Messiah, yet you killed Him by having Him nailed to a cross."

But Peter told them this was the plan of God all along. Jesus Himself had told them very clearly before He was crucified that He must suffer and be killed, but three days later God would raise Him from the dead.

Acts 2:32-33

"God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. (33) Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.

Peter boldly says, "You can't deny that God raised Jesus from the dead because you were all eye-witnesses! God did this so that you would have no doubt that the One you crucified, was the Messiah.

Acts 2:36

"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

The Holy Spirit was using Peter's message to work in their hearts.

Acts 2:37

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

When Peter accused the people of being responsible for the death of Jesus, God's Son, their hearts were broken. They were convicted of their sin and wanted to know what they needed to do next.

Acts 2:38

*Peter replied, "Each of you must **repent** of your sins and **turn to God**, and be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Wow! Peter was boldly used for the Lord, wasn't he? He was empowered by the Holy Spirit! He told them they needed to **repent**, or turn from their sins, turn to Jesus for forgiveness and **be baptized**. Peter told them that once they did that, they would **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.

When you call on the Lord Jesus to save you, God the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you to help you. The Holy Spirit gives you the power you need to live boldly for the Lord, to make godly choices, to say, "No!" to sin, and to speak with confidence about the things of the Lord. In fact, it will be hard for you not to tell everybody you meet about Jesus!

The Holy Spirit enabled Peter to stand up and tell thousands of people about what the Lord Jesus had done for mankind. He became a powerful witness for the Lord. When Peter finished talking, the people were convicted by God's Spirit, they wanted to know how to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, too. Many people received Jesus that day!

Acts 2:41

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Everyone in the world is born a sinner and needs to be saved. Everyone needs to hear the wonderful good news that Jesus came and took the punishment for sin. But not everyone will be convinced. Those who believed were added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all!

Let's read verse 42 to see what they did:

Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

The new believers gathered together regularly to hear the apostles teach about Jesus. These new believers lived a life filled with the Holy Spirit.

Object Lesson:

Only those who believed that Jesus died on the cross for their sins were born again on that day and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have the children sit in a circle. Give each child an empty paper cup. Ask, "What's inside your cups?" Hold up a paper cup, and say, "If we don't have Jesus in our lives, we may be like these cups: empty inside with nothing to give other people." Pour water into the cup you're holding. Say, "When we believe in Jesus and ask Him to be the Lord of our lives, God promises to pour His Spirit into us and fill us with His love, just as the water fills this cup."

Ask the children:

- Why did God give us the Holy Spirit?
- What happens when we're filled with God's Spirit?

Have the children stand in a circle, holding their paper cups. Say, "Let's see how being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit helps us live a victorious Christian life." Pour your water into another person's cup and whisper, "The Holy Spirit gives you **strength**." Then have that person pour the water into the next person's cup and repeat, "The Holy Spirit gives you **strength**." So on around the circle. Go around the circle again saying, "The Holy Spirit gives you **comfort**." Ask the children to think of things that the Holy Spirit gives them when they are filled with the Spirit of God. For example,

- The Holy Spirit gives you wisdom.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to say, "No!" to sin.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to live a Godly life.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to tell others about Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for sending us the Holy Spirit who gives us the power we need to live godly lives before You. Forgive us those times we forget to call upon Him when we need Him so desperately. We are so weak without Him and we need Him so badly. Thank You that Your power is only a prayer away. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Create a Tract: Using the pattern on page 6, let each child make a booklet by folding the page in half and then in half again. Or, give each child a paper on which they can print out neatly, the following:

Jesus can save you from your sin

Admit you have sinned. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23)

Believe Jesus died for your sins. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3)

Call on Jesus to save you (Romans 10:13)

Demonstrate how a tract can be used; give children an opportunity to practice in class with a partner.

GAME CENTER

Battle of Knowledge —

Materials: Masking tape, bean bag,

Procedure:

1. Cut out 8 red circles and eight black circles.
2. Write 16 Review questions.
3. Create a sixteen-sectioned grid on the floor with the masking tape, four sections wide and four sections deep.

●	●	○	○
●	○	○	○
●	●	○	○
●	●	●	○

4. Divide the class into two teams – the Reds and the Blacks
5. To win the game, your team must get four circles in a row. Taking turns each team throws the bean bag into an unoccupied square. If the team answers a Review Question correctly, they get to put one of their circles in that square. If the team answers incorrectly, the other team gets a chance to answer the same question. If the other team answers correctly, they get to put one of their circles in the square. Once a circle is in a square it cannot be removed.
6. Teams can work together to answer the question, but each team member must take a turn throwing the bean bag.

Or, Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What Jewish celebration was going on that brought all the foreigners to Jerusalem? (Pentecost)
2. What is Pentecost? (It's like Thanksgiving; it's a festival of thanksgiving for the harvested crops and God's provision.)
3. Where were the disciples waiting for the promise of the Father? (In the upper room.)
4. What sound did the disciples hear when they were waiting for the Promise of the Father? (A violent wind.)
5. What unusual sight did they see? (Tongues of fire.)
6. What did the disciples begin to do when the tongues of fire sat upon them? (They began to speak with other tongues or languages.)
7. Why were the people in Jerusalem confused? (They could hear the believers from Galilee speaking in the language they could understand.)
8. What did all the foreigners in Jerusalem think was happening? (They were all amazed and marveled; then some of them began to make fun of the disciples, saying they were drunk.)
9. What did the foreigners hear the believers saying in their own language? (About the wonderful things God has done.)
10. What did Peter do? (He stood up, raised his voice, and began to explain God's plan of salvation.)
11. What suddenly gave Peter the courage he lacked only a short time before? (He was filled with the Holy Spirit.)
12. What was the reaction of the crowd of people when they heard Peter preach? (After Peter's powerful, Spirit-filled message, the people were deeply moved and asked, "*What shall we do?*")
13. What did Peter tell the people to do when they asked, "*What shall we do?*" (He told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.)
14. What does it mean to repent? (Turn away from sinning.)
15. Lots of people came running when they heard the violent wind; they wanted to know what was going on. Did everyone who came get filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? (No! Only those who believed that Jesus died on the cross for their sins were born again on that day and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit)
16. What does the Holy Spirit give you? (Wisdom, comfort, strength, the power you need to live boldly for the Lord, to make godly choices, to say, "No!" to sin and to speak with confidence about the things of the Lord.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

A Lame Man is Healed

(Acts 3:1-19)

Introduction

Today we are going to talk about a 40-year-old man that had been lame from birth. What do you think life was like for this poor lame man? (He couldn't do much for himself; he couldn't get up and move around on his own. As a boy, he couldn't run and jump and play with the other boys.) How is it possible for a disabled man to survive? (He'd have to depend totally on his friends to help him.)

What would your life be like if you couldn't walk? What would your social life be like? How would things be different for you economically?

It was hard for this lame man to find work to support himself so he turned to begging. Have you ever seen homeless people alongside the road, begging? Have you ever stopped to give them something? Or, do you just drive by? How does it make you feel?

In what way do you think a person without the Lord is like a lame person? [Teacher, discuss how he was stuck in his situation and unable to heal himself. Without Christ a person is disabled, too, and unable to save himself; hopeless.]

Opening Prayer

Father, open our spiritual eyes and ears this morning to hear Your voice through this lesson. We want to learn how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to You. Guide our thoughts and our words as we study Your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

"Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes. (Acts 3:16 NLT)

Lesson

We have been studying about the very beginning of the Christian church. Last week our lesson started with only 120 believers gathered in the upper room, waiting for the promise of the Father. Then we learned about that after God sent the Holy Spirit with a violent wind and tongues of fire, 3,000 more people became believers.

Those first Christians continued to meet together to learn about Jesus. They did life together, getting meals, having communion and praying with each other. And God worked wonders among them.

The Jews at that time were required to go to the Temple to pray three times a day: 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m. One afternoon Peter and John went to the Temple to pray and they came upon a poor lame man who had never been able to walk. He was sitting outside the Temple begging people for money.

Acts 3:1-2

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. (2) As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple.

We find out in chapter 4 this poor lame beggar was 40 years old (see Acts 4:22). So, every day for 40 years his friends carried him to the gate, which was called Beautiful.

Ask: Why do you think the Temple gate a good location for begging? (Three times a day, everyone came through that gate to pray. Many people thought that giving money to the poor would gain them favor with God. Some people wanted to be seen by others giving to this poor lame beggar.)

When the man saw Peter and John coming to the Temple, he asked them for money. [**Note:** "Alms" is money.]

Acts 3:3-4

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. (4) Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!"

When you pass a homeless person, do you look into their eyes? Not many people will do that; it makes them uncomfortable. Usually, people look away from someone in need. It says that Peter and John looked at him intently. And this got the man's attention.

To have someone look into his eyes probably made the man excited; he probably thought for sure they were going to give him money.

In fact, Peter and John did have something to give this lame man.

Acts 3:5-6

The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. (6) But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"

The crippled man asked for money in order to survive. It was his only way to make money to pay for food.

Ask: Do you think the man was disappointed when Peter and John said they didn't have any money to give him?

Peter gave him something much better than money — the use of his legs! Peter was saying if he believed in Jesus, he could have a whole new life. Only God has that kind of power.

We often ask God to solve a small problem, but he wants to give us a whole new life and help for all our problems. When you ask God for something, don't be surprised when instead of giving you what you want; He gives you what you really need.

Peter reached his right hand out to the man and he took it.

Acts 3:7-8

Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. (8) He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

As Peter raised the man up, he immediately felt strength in his feet and ankles. He had never stood up in his entire life. As he felt strength in his ankles and feet, he took a step. Then another. He was able to walk immediately even though he had never learned how. This was a miracle! A miracle is something that only God can do.

The man was so excited he couldn't stand still! He didn't want to just walk, he leaped up and went into the Temple with Peter and John walking, leaping, and praising God! As he leaped around, he shouted, "Praise God! Praise God!" He was so thankful!

And people were amazed to see him...

Acts 3:9-10

All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. (10) When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!

The people couldn't believe their eyes! They looked at Peter as though it was by his power that this man was healed. But Peter gave the honor to God.

Acts 3:11-15

They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John. (12) Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? (13) For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. (14) You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. (15) You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

Peter had been the one who spoke to the lame man and took his hand to help him up. It would be easy for him to take credit for what God had done. But he knew that the healing came through the power

of the Holy Spirit, not his own. Peter wanted to give the honor and praise to whom it was due: God.

Ask: Do you think it might have been tempting for Peter to want people to think it was by his own power the man was healed? When you do something well, are you tempted to take the credit for it? Remember to give honor to God for what He does in your life.

Peter wanted to make it clear that it was Jesus, not himself, who healed the crippled man.

Acts 3:16

“Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes.

By using Jesus’ name, Peter showed who gave him the authority and power to heal.

Jesus has power to help you with whatever you need. That’s why we end our prayers by saying, *“In Jesus Name we pray.”* It is because we believe that Jesus has power to hear and answer our prayers.

But Jesus’ name is not to be used as magic — it must be used in faith. When we pray in Jesus’ name, we must remember that it is Christ himself, not merely the sound of his name, who gives our prayers their power.

Peter told the people in the crowd that Jesus has the power to forgive their sins:

Acts 3:19

Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.

Like this poor lame beggar, without Christ, you are disabled, too. You are unable to save yourself. But when you place your faith in Jesus, He heals you spiritually so that you are born again to a whole new life.

The power of the Holy Spirit healed that man and His power can give you a whole new life of victory, too.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to give You all the glory and honor that’s due Your name. As we sit here quietly for a moment, fill our hearts and minds with the wonder of You! You are so great and awesome and loving and kind. We love You, Lord. Thank You for all the great and wonderful things You’ve done in my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Take Home Activity: Prepare a card for each child to fill in during the week:

**Give honor to God for what He does in your life
(Revelation 4:11)**

What is one thing God did for you this week?

How did you give honor to God?

Next week any child that wants to, can honor God by sharing what God did for them.

GAME CENTER

Allow the children to act out this story using dress up clothes.

Pop-The-Question —

Write the review questions on separate slips of paper and insert them into balloons. Blow them up. Let the children pop a balloon, one at a time, and answer the question. Small children may wish to have someone else pop their balloon for them.

Variations:

- Insert numbers that correspond to a list of questions instead of the questions.
- Put the game point values on slips of paper in the balloon. So, for every right answer they can pop a balloon and see what points their team gets.
- Each child gets a chance to throw a ball into a basketball hoop. For making a basket, the child gets to choose a balloon, pop it and try to answer the question. His team gets 50 points for every right answer.

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What time did Peter and John go to the Temple? (The hour of prayer; 3 p.m.)
2. Why was the hour of prayer a good time for the crippled man to beg for money? (Many were coming to the Temple at that time.)
3. Why was the crippled man carried to the temple? (To beg money.)
4. What are “alms”? (Money or goods given to the poor)
5. What was the name of the place they sat the cripple every day? (The beautiful gate.)
6. Why was the Temple gate a good location for begging? (Sitting at the Temple gate was a good location to beg because many people thought that giving money to the poor would gain them favor with God. Some people wanted to be seen by others giving to this poor lame beggar.)
7. Is what the man wanted, what he needed most? What did the man at the Beautiful Gate need most: money or the physical healing of his legs? (Legs!)
8. What did the lame man think when Peter and John looked into his eyes? (That he would probably get something from them.)
9. How was the crippled man healed? (By faith in the Name of Jesus.)
10. What was the lame man’s reaction after he was healed? (He jumped up and praised God.)
11. Do you think it might have been tempting for Peter to want people to think it was by his own power the man was healed?
12. How did people respond to the lame man’s enthusiastic reaction to his healing? (They were amazed and awed by God’s power.)
13. Why do you end your prayers with the phrase, “*In the name of Jesus. Amen?*” Does that actually do any good? (It is Christ himself, not merely the sound of his name, who gives our prayers their power.)
14. What did Peter tell the crowd they needed to do so they could be forgiven of their sins? (Repent and turn to God.)
15. What do you need God’s power to do this week? (Obey parents/teachers, tell others about Jesus, be kind, read Bible and Pray.)

The Spirit Gives Boldness

(Acts 4:1-31)

Introduction

One of the last things Jesus told his disciples before He ascended into Heaven was to go into the world and make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (20) Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus wants us to go out and tell everyone the Good News that He came to save us from the penalty of our sins. We call that "witnessing" or "testifying." But sometimes it can be hard to talk to people about the Lord.

Ask: Why can it be hard to witness to others about the Lord?

[Teacher, discuss problems that make witnessing difficult — feeling of shyness, not knowing who to talk to; being afraid of ridicule or persecution; not knowing what to say.]

We have learned that the Holy Spirit enabled Peter to stand up and boldly tell thousands of people about what the Lord Jesus had done for mankind. He became a powerful witness for the Lord.

If you are a true believer in Jesus, you have the same Holy Spirit living inside you that enabled Peter to be a bold witness. Today we are going to learn that the Holy Spirit helps us be a strong witness; He gives us the power to share the Good News about Jesus with others.

Opening Prayer

Father, I want to be a bold witness for You. As we study the Holy Spirit this morning, I pray that we will gain confidence as we go out and tell people about what You came to do for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Lesson

Chapter four is a continuation of the story we learned about last week. The people are gathered around in awe at the miracle that had taken place. Peter and John told the people that it was by faith in Jesus' Name that the lame man was healed. However, whenever God is at work in the hearts of people, God's enemy doesn't like it.

Ask: Who is God's enemy? (Satan/devil.)

We are about to see God's enemy at work in chapter four.

Acts 4:1-3

*While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. (2) **These leaders were very disturbed** that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. (3) They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning.*

Ask: What do we know about these priests, the Temple guard, and Sadducees? Why do you think that these Jewish religious leaders were *greatly annoyed*?

These were the rulers or leaders of the Jewish religion and they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. And they thought when they put Jesus to death that would be the end of Him. But here was Peter and John, proclaiming that Lord Jesus died on the cross, was buried and three days later was raised from the dead. And, they were saying it was this same Jesus who performed this miracle.

Whenever the power of Jesus is being proclaimed, God's enemy will try to interfere. The last thing Satan wants is for people to put their faith in Jesus and be saved.

The crowd at the Temple courts that day had witnessed an amazing miracle and they heard Peter preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit had given Peter the words to share the Good News that if the people would repent from their sins and believe in Jesus, they could be saved. And many people came to faith in Jesus.

Acts 4:4

But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

The crowds' reaction to the teaching of God's Word was belief; now there were about 5,000 believers. [Note there were now 5,000 believers total: 3,000 in Acts 2:41 + 2,000 here in Acts 4:4.]

Peter and John were obeying Jesus' command to tell others the Good News and many people believed.

The next day Peter and John were brought before the religious leaders for questioning.

Acts 4:5-7

The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. (6) Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. (7) They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

Ask: What question did the Jewish religion leaders ask Peter and John? (*By what power or by what name did you do this.*)

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the courage to boldly set the record straight.

Acts 4:8-10

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, (9) are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? (10) Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that **he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ** the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.*

Peter makes it clear that the man was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ.

Ask: What makes the name of Jesus so powerful? When Peter and John told the lame man, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,*" (Acts 3:6), they did not mean that the word "Jesus" had the power to heal. It was Jesus Himself that healed the man.

Ask: When you speak Jesus' Name, what comes to your mind? Hopefully it is His many character traits, like His mercy or forgiveness, His almighty power to overcome evil or disease.

Peter went on to proclaim to the Jewish religious leaders:

Acts 4:12

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

The lame man was healed by faith in the Name of Jesus, He is Almighty God. There is power in no other Name.

While Peter was speaking to the religious leaders, they saw the courage he and John had.

Acts 4:13

*The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. **They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.***

Ask: What made the Jews think the disciples had been with Jesus?

They knew that that Peter and John were just ordinary men. But because Peter and John had the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of them, it was hard not to notice something was different about them. It was obvious that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

Ask: If you spend time with Jesus, what will people notice about you?

They should see the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If we are believers, people should be able to see that we are different because we know and follow Jesus.

Acts 4:14-16

*But since **they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them**, there was nothing the council could say. (15) So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. (16) “What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can’t deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.*

The religious leaders didn’t know what to do with Peter and John. They wanted to put a stop to Peter and John telling people about Jesus, but they couldn’t deny that an amazing miracle had happened. Everyone in Jerusalem knew that the lame man had been healed. The man who had been lame was standing right there among them.

So this is what they came up with...

Acts 4:17-18

But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus’ name again.” (18) So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Because the Holy Spirit lived inside of them, Peter and John knew that they could not obey the religious leaders’ command because they would be disobeying Jesus’ command to go into the world and make disciples.

Acts 4:19-20

But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? (20) We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

The religious leaders threatened Peter and John a bit more and then released them.

Acts 4:21-22

The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn’t know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God (22) for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

The Jewish religious leaders saw everyone praising God because of this miracle. They knew if they punished Peter and John further, the people would start a riot so they just let them go.

When Peter and John were released from jail, they went back to the place where the believers met and shared with them what had happened.

Acts 4:23

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.

They went to God in prayer and praised Him.

Acts 4:24

When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—

Now let’s look down at verses 29-30 to see what they prayed for.

Acts 4:29-30

*And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and **give us**, your servants, **great boldness in preaching your word**. (30) **Stretch out your hand with healing power**; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

Ask: What did the believers pray for?

Then they asked God enable them to continue to speak God's Word with boldness and to continue to heal others in the Name of Jesus.

God heard the believers' prayer and something amazing happened.

Acts 4:31

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

There was an earthquake and the Holy Spirit gave them the power to speak God's Word with boldness. The Holy Spirit gave these believers the courage to share the Good News.

If you have believed in the Name of Jesus, you have the same Holy Spirit living inside you that Peter and John had. He will give you courage to follow Jesus and do what He wants you to do each and every day.

Next week we will continue to take our journey through the book of Acts.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that the Holy Spirit lives in each of us to help us be brave! We can count on the Holy Spirit to give us courage and boldness. Now give us a heart to tell everyone about You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Basket Ball

For every right answer, the child gets three shots at basketball. Each basket is worth 200 points. [You can use a trash can and paper wadded up.]

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What does it mean to "witness" to someone?
2. Who doesn't like it when God is working in people's hearts? (God's enemy, Satan, doesn't like it.)
3. Why were the religious leaders very disturbed? (They thought when they put Jesus to death that would be the end of Him! But here were Peter and John teaching the people about Jesus.)
4. What were Peter and John teaching the people that made the Jewish religious leaders so upset? (That Jesus rose from the dead and that faith in Him alone would save them.)
5. Why did they put Peter and John in jail? (Because many who heard Peter preach the Good News believed and came to faith.)
6. How many people believed the message of the Good News? (5,000 total: 3,000 in Acts 2:41, 2,000 in Acts 4:4.)
7. What question did the Jewish religious leaders ask Peter and John? ("*By what power or by what name did you do this?*")
8. What did Peter mean when he said it was the name of Jesus that healed the man? (Faith in Jesus is what saves you, not the saying of His name.)
9. When you speak Jesus' Name, what comes to your mind? (His mercy, forgiveness, almighty power...)
10. What made the Jewish religious leaders think the disciples had been with Jesus? (They saw the boldness of Peter and John; the power of the Holy Spirit.)

11. If you spend time with Jesus, what will people notice about you?
(The fruit of the Spirit.)
12. What did the religious leaders command Peter and John? (Not to speak or teach at all in the Name of Jesus.)
13. Why did the Jewish religious leaders finally let them out of jail?
(Because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. Everyone knew the truth of what happened.)
14. Why couldn't Peter and John stop telling people about Jesus?
(They knew if they did that, they would be disobeying Jesus' command to go into the world and make disciples.)
15. What did the believers pray about after Peter and John were released? (Vs 29-30: They asked God enable them to continue to speak God's Word with boldness and to continue to heal others in the Name of Jesus.)
16. After Peter and John prayed, how did God answer their prayer?
(Earthquake and gave them boldness to speak God's Word.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Ananias and Sapphira Lie to God

(Acts 4:32 – 5:12)

Introduction

[Teacher, put on a mask and ask the children:] "*Why do people wear masks?*" (So they can pretend to be something or someone they aren't; or, to hide who or what they really are.) Is it possible to hide who we are or pretend to be someone else without wearing a mask? (Yes!)

The husband and wife in our lesson today tried to fool all their friends in their church group by pretending to be something they were not. Do you think they fooled God? Why not? (God is all-knowing!)

Opening Prayer

Father, You hate that which is false. It grieves Your heart when we are dishonest. There is no such thing as a little white lie. All falsehood is sin to you. I pray that this morning as we learn about the horrible consequences to Ananias and Sapphira for telling lies, it will prick our hearts and cause us to strive to be honest in all we think, say, or do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

The righteous hate what is false. (Proverbs 13:5)

And/or

Surely You desire truth in the inner parts. (Psalm 51:6)

Lesson

The last few weeks we've been learning about the early Christians. After Jesus ascended back up to Heaven, we learned that God sent the Holy Spirit to the believers. Who remembers what happens when we're filled with God's Spirit? (He gives us the power to say, "No!" to sin and gives us the desire to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

He also gives us courage and boldness to tell others about Jesus so they will become followers of Jesus, too.

We learned that the Holy Spirit had given Peter and John special power to heal a lame man. And then the Spirit enabled Peter to boldly preach to the people about their need for Jesus.

Life for these early Christians was wonderful. God's blessings were upon them.

Acts 4:32-35

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. (33) The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. (34) There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them (35) and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

The early Christians were so excited to know the truth about Jesus and God's love for them that they wanted to live together like one big happy family. Verse 32 says, "*All the believers were of one heart and mind.*" There was no grumbling or strife among them. They took care of one another and helped anyone who had a need.

None of these Christians felt that what they had was their own; they wanted to share everything they had with the other believers.

Ask: Is it easy for you to share what you have with others?

Remember that every good and perfect gift is ultimately from God. (James 1:17) He has given us so much; we should be willing to share.

They were even willing to sell their houses or lands to help other believers. They gladly bought the money to the apostles who gave the money to those in need. Verse 34 tells us, "*There were no needy people among them.*"

Acts 4:36-37

For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. (37) He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, sold some land and brought the money to the apostles.

Now we're about to find out that even though the Holy Spirit had come and given the people special powers and gifts, they were not protected from Satan's temptations. Just like it is today, Satan is still actively trying to make believers sin against God.

Acts 5:1-2

*But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. (2) He **brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount.** With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.*

Selling your property and sharing the profits with the other believers was completely voluntary. No one was forcing them to sell their land. If believers did choose to sell something they owned, the money was theirs to use as they wanted. They could have kept it for themselves.

Ask: What did Ananias do that was so wrong?

He lied. After Ananias and Sapphira saw how well Barnabas was respected for his generosity, they wanted to appear generous, too. But they only brought part of the money to the apostles, and kept the rest for themselves.

Ask: Why did Ananias lie?

Ananias and Sapphira desired people's praise.

Acts 5:3-4

*Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have **you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit,** and you kept some of the money for yourself. (4) The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"*

Ask: Who gave Ananias the idea to lie? (Satan filled his heart.)

Ask: Why does Satan want you to sin?

Satan, God's enemy, tries to get you to sin because he wants to keep God from doing powerful things in and through your life. And, he wants to keep you from having a bold witness and a powerful testimony.

God hates lying. If you lie, you have no part with Jesus. The Bible says that Satan is the father of lies and when you lie you are acting as if you are a child of the devil.

John 8:44 [Jesus speaking to the Jewish religious leaders.]

*For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for **he is a liar and the father of lies.***

God expects you to be truthful.

[Teacher, discuss how dishonesty is like a trap: one lie often leads to more, and before you know it, the lies have taken over.]

Ask: Ananias was talking with Peter, why does verse 3 say Ananias was lying to the Holy Spirit?

God knows everything. He knows the intentions of your heart.

Acts 5:5-6

As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. (6) Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

Wow! God's punishment was severe, wasn't it? Meanwhile, his wife didn't know what had happened to her husband...

Acts 5:7-10

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. (8) Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price."

(9) *And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." (10) Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.*

Ask: Why do you think God judged Ananias and Sapphira's dishonesty so harshly?

All lying is bad, but it is especially bad among Christians because it ruins our testimony.

If you are trying to tell someone about the love of Christ and the benefits of becoming a Christian, why would they believe you if they know you are a liar?

God *had* to discipline Ananias' and Sapphira's sin because the church was just getting started and God had to impress on the people that He is serious about sin and our need to live holy, set-apart lives.

Ask: How come we don't die when we lie? [Allow for answers.]

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. When we sin, we deserve to die; God could take our lives if He wanted to, but because of His grace and mercy He waits for us to confess our sins to Him so He can forgive us. Yet, God chose to take the lives of Ananias and Sapphira so that people would know how serious He is about holiness.

So, Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was lying—saying they gave the whole amount, trying to make people think they were more generous than they really were. It was their choice whether or not to sell their land and how much to give.

God knew their heart and punished both of them for their sin. God knows when a person is pretending to be a sincere follower of Christ.

[Teacher, write "*hypocrite*" on the board.] The word *Hypocrite* is a Greek word for "*stage actor*." That's why we use this word to describe

someone who pretends to be what he is not. Greek hypocrites (actors) used to wear masks to play out their parts.

Ask: When are some times kids might be tempted to be hypocritical? [Allow discussion.] (Pretending to be smart or clever, or showing off or bragging about yourself, thinking that that others would like you.)

Ask: Have you ever known someone who **exaggerated** when telling a story? (Exaggeration is lying!)

Ask: What are some hypocritical things people sometimes do in church? (Pretend to be religious, know God's word, be big prayers.)

When you are a hypocrite, a play actor, you may be able to fool some people with lies, but God is not fooled! He knows what you are really like inside. We are not to think for a minute we can get away with lying; God knows our every thought! (See Hebrews 4:12)

Ask: What was the effect of Ananias' and Sapphira's harsh and sudden punishment on the believers?

When Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was punished, two things happened:

Acts 5:11-12

*Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened. (12) The **apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders** among the people. And all the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon's Colonnade.*

It says great fear came over the people and the apostles performed many miracles. When it says that "*great fear gripped*" the people, it just means that everyone who heard what happened to Ananias and Sapphira had a healthy respect for God. They knew God takes sin very seriously. And when the people took God seriously, the Holy Spirit began to work in mighty ways through the apostles among the people; many miracles were performed.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help us to always be truthful with You and with others. And, help us to be honest in everything we do. We also ask You to help us to be generous with the things You have given us. Don't let me hold back from sharing with others, like Ananias and Sapphira did. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Object Lesson

Brown-E's Trick

[Teacher, before class, place many brown E's cut out of brown construction paper in a baking pan covered with aluminum foil. Act VERY excited!]



I made brownies!! I cooked all morning, and out of the goodness of my heart, I brought in brownies for all of you!! The kitchen smelled so good!! They cooked and they cooled. Would you like to have one? [Kids should be excited and ready for a yummy brownie. Carefully peel away the foil and begin handing out the "Brown E's". Allow the children to react to your trick.]

What? Why are you disappointed and upset?

Did I have to bring you brownies today? (No.)

Did Ananias and Sapphira HAVE to give all of their money to the church? (No.) They tried to trick people in believing they were more generous than they really were.

My bringing you brownies would have been a treat. A blessing. A gift. Instead, what did you receive? (Nothing but a trick.)

[Teacher, have some real brownies for the children to eat at the end of class.]

Game Center

Bowling

Spray-paint 10 2-liter-sized, plastic soda bottles. Set them up like bowling pins. Have each child take a turn, using a rubber ball. For a correct answer to a review question, a child gets an opportunity to bowl. The child or team gets points for every pin knocked down.

Use the following questions in a discussion:

1. Why did the people share everything they had? (None of these Christians felt that what they owned was their own. The believers took care of one another and helped anyone who had a need.)
2. What was Ananias' and Sapphira's sin? (Lying and hypocrisy. Saying they gave the whole amount and trying to make people think they were more generous than they really were.)
3. Did Ananias and Sapphira HAVE to give all of their money to the church? (No! They were trying to look generous while being greedy.)
4. Why was God's punishment so harsh? (All lying is bad, but it is especially bad among Christians because it damages their testimony. Why would anyone believe you if they think you are a liar?)
5. Why does Satan want you to sin? (He wants to keep you from having a bold witness and having a powerful testimony.)
6. What was the effect of Ananias' and Sapphira's harsh and sudden punishment on the believers? (Great fear came over the people and the apostles performed many miracles.)

7. How come we don't die when we lie? [Allow for answers.] What do all people deserve? [The wages of sin is death.] The fact that we do not die when we sin is grace and mercy from God. God could take our lives if He wanted to, but for some reason he chose to do this with Ananias and Sapphira. They became an example to the early church.
8. What can we learn from Ananias and Sapphira? (If we want to be godly, then we must remember that God knows our thoughts and motivations, and that He cannot be tricked.)
9. What should we do when we begin to think about tricking someone, or saying something about another person, or trying to do something we know is wrong when we are by ourselves, or some other sin? (The Bible tells us to take every thought captive. When we begin to start thinking negative thoughts about a person or situation, then we need to tell ourselves, "*No! Stop thinking that! God wants me to be honest. He wants me to be pure. He wants me to honor him all the time.*")

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The Apostles are Persecuted

(Acts 5:14-42)

Introduction

[Teacher, discuss persecution in terms the children will relate to; use the following questions as discussion starters...] Has anyone been mean to you because you are a Christian? Has anyone ever made fun of you because of what you believe? Has anyone ever laughed at you because you wanted to do the "right" thing? Has anyone tried to make you feel weird for not wanting to laugh at a dirty joke or join in a mean trick? Do other children make fun of you, laugh at you, call you names, or even hit you when you try to tell them about the Lord Jesus? Have you ever been left out of an activity because you've let others know you believe in Jesus? That is called "*persecution*." To be persecuted means to be treated with meanness or cruelty because of what you believe.

The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12, "*All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*" This is a promise! You can expect it to happen sometime in your life. Today's lesson is about a time when Peter and John were persecuted for telling others about Jesus.

Opening Prayer

Father, persecution is NOT something I look forward to, but I do pray that I am bold enough in my walk with you that other people know that I am a Christian. Give us the courage to tell others that Jesus is the only way to be saved, even if we are persecuted. Today as we study Your word, show us how we are to live out our lives in such a way that others will want to know You better. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. (Matthew 5:11)

Lesson

The last few weeks we've been learning about the early Christians. After Jesus ascended back up to Heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit to the believers to give them power to live their lives in a way that pleases God and the courage and boldness to tell others about what Jesus did for mankind on the cross.

We learned that the Holy Spirit gave Peter and John special power to heal a lame man. And then the Spirit enabled Peter to boldly preach to the people about their need for Jesus. Next, we learned that even though the Holy Spirit had come and given the people special powers and gifts, they were not protected from Satan's temptations. Ananias and Sapphira were tempted by Satan to lie.

Today we learn that just as people hated Jesus and wanted to kill Him when He was here on earth, so people hated the early Christians, like Peter and John, who were continuing to tell people about Jesus.

Peter and John taught that Jesus is God and while many people became believers, the Jewish religious leaders were jealous and tried to stop them. But the apostles kept preaching and God confirmed their message with great signs and wonders doing miracles of healing among the people. And, more and more people turned to the Lord.

Acts 5:14-16

Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. (15) As a result of the apostles' work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall across some of them as he went by. (16) Crowds came from the villages around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those possessed by evil spirits, and they were all healed.

Many people heard about Jesus and believed. Many sick people were brought to the apostles and were healed. When Jesus was on earth, He healed the sick; now that He had returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit living inside the apostles was healing the sick.

You would think that the Jewish religious leaders would be happy to see people coming to God to be saved and sick people being healed. But instead, they were jealous and angry.

Why do you think they were jealous? These men claimed to know God and were the leaders of the people, supposedly teaching them about God, but they clearly did not have the same kind of power to do miracles that the apostles had. They couldn't have the power because they did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Because they didn't believe in Jesus, they could not have the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of them giving them the power to do things for God.

When the Jewish religious leaders saw that Jesus, even though He was not here physically among the living, was still drawing people away from following them, they threw Peter and John back in jail. Again, God's enemy, the devil, was trying to stop God's work.

Acts 5:17-18

The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. (18) They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

Then, something amazing happened that night!

Acts 5:19-20

But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, (20) "Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!"

Woe! That must have been a surprise for Peter and John to suddenly be brought out of prison by an angel! The prisons in those days were highly secure. Peter and John, no doubt, had their ankles and wrists chained to the wall. And, the guards knew that the penalty for letting a prisoner escape was death, so they guarded the prison with their lives! There's no way out of those dungeons. But suddenly Peter and John found themselves with an angel who was telling them to go back to the Temple and tell people about Jesus! Their heads must have been spinning!

Peter and John knew that if they began to tell people about the risen Savior they would surely be persecuted — whipped, beaten, spit upon, and certainly sent back to prison. If you had been Peter or John what would you have done? Would you have said, "You *must* be

crazy! I'm not going out there! I'm out of here!" What did Peter and John do?

Acts 5:21a [Teacher, read only the first sentence...]

So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching.

Peter and John were so excited about the Lord, they couldn't wait to tell everybody about Jesus! They went to the Temple first thing in the morning! Like Peter and John, we should be so excited to tell others about Jesus that you don't care if people persecute you.

[Teacher, review today's memory verse.] To be "*blessed*" means to be "*joyful on the inside*." But how can you have joy inside when others are treating you badly? Realize that Jesus understands what you're going through because He suffered much more than you. Remember that your persecution can help to make you more like the Lord Jesus. Keep in mind that the one persecuting you — or others that might be watching — may come to know the Lord through your example. Remind yourself that God has promised to reward you in heaven if you remain faithful in spite of persecution.

Instead of being discouraged, you can actually be joyful on the inside when others persecute you or say untrue things about you because you talk about Jesus. The apostles knew they might be persecuted, but they also knew that God wanted them to tell others that only Jesus could save them.

Meanwhile, the Jewish religious leaders didn't know that Peter and John were teaching in the Temple, so they got together and went to the prison to get them.

Acts 5:21b [Teacher, read the rest...]

When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council—the full assembly of the elders of Israel. Then they sent for the apostles to be brought from the jail for trial.

Let's see what happened when the Temple guards went to the prison.

Acts 5:22-23

But when the Temple guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned to the council and reported, (23) "The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!"

The prison doors were locked and guarded, but the prison was empty!

Acts 5:24-25

When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. (25) Then someone arrived with startling news: "The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!"

So, they all went to the Temple...

Acts 5:26-28

The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested the apostles, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would stone them. (27) Then they brought the apostles before the high council, where the high priest confronted them. (28) "We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man's name!" he said. "Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!"

It's interesting that the high priest and the captain of the Temple didn't ask how they got out of prison! They were more concerned about trying to keep Peter and John from telling any more people about Jesus. They didn't believe in Jesus' resurrection and didn't want to hear about it. Nor did they want to hear that they had been responsible for Jesus' death. But Peter and John weren't afraid of what the high priest and the captain of the Temple could do to them.

Peter is then filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks out boldly...

Acts 5:29-32

But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. (30) The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the

dead after you killed him by hanging him on a cross. (31) Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven. (32) We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him."

God wants us to obey rules that people set for us except when they tell us to disobey God. Then we must obey God and be willing to pay the penalty human rules demand. [Teacher, lead a discussion about this with the children.]

When the Jewish religious leaders heard Peter preach, they went crazy!

Acts 5:33

When they heard this, the high council was furious and decided to kill them.

The Jewish religious leaders were so angry they wanted to put the apostles to death. Fortunately, there was one religious leader that had godly wisdom!

Acts 5:34-35

But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was an expert in religious law and respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while. (35) Then he said to his colleagues, "Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men!"

Gamaliel told the other council members that they better be careful what they do with Peter and John.

Acts 5:38-40

"So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. (39) But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!" (40) The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them

flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

Beaten and warned not to talk about Jesus, the apostles were set free. But that didn't stop them from spreading the good news about Jesus.

Acts 5:41

The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.

God did not keep the apostles from persecution, but He did give them courage as they suffered. God tells us that we, too, may be persecuted if, as Christians, we speak for Him (2 Timothy 3:12). But God can give you courage to tell others about what Jesus did for us on the cross, even if you are persecuted. If you know it is the truth, nothing should stop you!

Do not let persecution discourage you; instead do as Jesus instructed us...

Matthew 5:44

But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

When someone makes fun of you or laughs at you, show love to him instead of acting as he does. If someone curses you, saying mean things or calling you names, bless him, that is, answer him kindly. Then compliment him for something he does well. Let God show His love to them through you. Pray for those who are unkind to you; ask God to give you courage to continue telling them about Jesus. They may begin to listen to what Jesus can do for them and trust Him as their Savior if you carefully share with them. You may face persecution, but don't be discouraged. Be Joyful; remember, God promises that your reward in heaven will be great (Matthew 5:11). The apostles were not discouraged even though they had been beaten. God gave them courage and joy in their suffering.

Acts 5:42

And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: "Jesus is the Messiah."

The apostles left rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer for Jesus!

Closing Prayer

Father, we pray that nothing will discourage us from telling people about You. Help us to remember that everyone is born a sinner and in need of a Savior. If we don't tell people about You, they may never hear about Your wonderful plan of Salvation. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit like you did Peter and John so that we might have the courage we need to be bold for You. In Jesus name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Game Center

Question Matching

Write questions and their answers on separate cards. Place the answers around the room. Split the class into two teams. Taking turns, pull a question card from a bag. Let the team find the answer. A right answer is worth 500 points. If they can't find the answer, let the other team try to find it. Team with most points wins.

Or, use the following review questions in a discussion or another game of your choice:

1. What does it mean to be persecuted? (To be treated with cruelty.)
2. Why can you be joyful when someone makes fun of you for doing good? (Because you know you are pleasing God.)

3. Why did the Jewish religious leaders become jealous? (Because many people stopped following their advice and were instead following Jesus.)
4. Why did the Jewish religious leaders persecute Peter and John? (Because they were jealous of their popularity.)
5. What did the Jewish religious leaders do to Peter and John? (They threw them into prison.)
6. What amazing thing happened to Peter and John when they were in prison? (An angel brought them out.)
7. What scary thing did the angel tell Peter and John to do? (Go back to the Temple and speak about Jesus, the very thing that got them sent to prison in the first place.)
8. If you had been Peter and John, would you have started preaching to people about Jesus again, knowing you could be sent back to prison?
9. What did Peter and John do? Did they obey the angel or not? (They went to the Temple first thing in the morning! They were so excited to tell others about Jesus they didn't care if they were persecuted.)
10. Why did the apostles rejoice after they were beaten? (They counted it a privilege to suffer for Christ, Who had suffered so much for them.)
11. When is it OK not to obey the law? (When you are told to disobey God. Then we must obey God and be willing to pay the penalty human rules demand.)
12. What did the Jewish religious leaders do when they heard Peter preach? (They went crazy! They were furious and made plans to kill him.)
13. What are you supposed to do if someone makes fun of you or laughs at you? (Show them love instead of acting just like them. Answer them kindly. Let God show His love to them through you. Pray for those who are unkind to you.)

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Seven Men are Chosen to Minister

(Acts 6:1-7)

Introduction

Are you still growing? Having a body that is growing and becoming stronger is a good thing. But can you think of anything that might be negative about growing? [Allow students to think about this and respond.] It is kind of sad when we grow out of our favorite clothes or shoes and have to give them away or take them to Goodwill. But it can be fun to go shopping for new things!

Ask: Have any of you ever had growing pains? They can hurt!

We have been learning about the early church from the Book of Acts. As the Good News about Jesus was being preached in Jerusalem, many people were being saved. Each time a person is saved, the family of believers gets bigger. Just like your growing body, a growing Church is a good thing, but there can be some problems, too. The Body of Christ doesn't have the same problem of outgrowing clothes or shoes, but does face other problems as a result of growth.

Today we will learn that seven men of good character were chosen to help solve a big problem in the early church.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be useful to You in our church. Help us to listen so we will know what character traits we need to develop so that we can be chosen for the work of the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

Lesson

Before we get into our lesson for today, let's refresh our memories about what has been happening so far in our study of the book of Acts. [Teacher, allow students to share what they remember, prompt them with some of the highlights of the last six lessons:

- Jesus' Ascension
- Pentecost—Holy Spirit descended
- Peter preached and 3,000 believed
- Lame man was healed
- Peter and John sent to jail
- Believers not protected from Satan's temptation to sin—Ananias and Sapphira lied
- Apostles Persecuted—Peter and John back in jail
- Rescued by an angel]

Last time we left off with chapter 5 verse 42.

Acts 5:42

And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: "Jesus is the Messiah."

The church had been growing very quickly and it was having growing pains.

Acts 6:1

*But as the believers rapidly multiplied, **there were rumblings of discontent.** The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

There were two groups of people coming to faith: Greek-speaking believers and Hebrew-speaking believers. Greek-speaking believers were mostly from all over the Roman Empire. The Hebrew-speaking believers were mostly from Judea. [Teacher, point these areas out on the map.]

The Hebrew-speaking believers tried to keep the customs and traditions of the Jewish culture while the Greek-speaking believers

lived outside of Jerusalem and did not practice the Jewish traditions; they did not even speak the Hebrew language, they spoke Greek.

In verse 1 we see that both groups had widows. What is a widow? (A woman whose husband died.) In those days most women were not able to have jobs, so they could not earn money to live on. They were depending on having a husband to care for them. Without a husband, other people had to take care of them. God's people knew it was important to make sure the widows' needs were met.

In our passage today the Greek-speaking believers felt like their widows were not being taken care of as well as the Hebrew-speaking believers. So, they began to complain that their widows were being passed over in the daily distribution of food.

Up until now Satan had been attacking the church from the outside. Remember, Satan was working through the Jewish religious leaders to stop the apostles from teaching and preaching Jesus. Now we see Satan attacking the church from the inside by trying to get fellow believers to argue and fight against each other. Satan will try to do anything and everything he can to begin a church-splitting conflict. He caused these two groups to be jealous of each other which causes bitterness and anger.

When the apostles heard that there was a problem, they wanted to take care of it right away.

Ask: How would you have solved this problem?

The 12 apostles gathered the believers together and came up with a solution to the problem.

Acts 6:2

So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program."

Each person in the family of God has a job to do. The apostles were called to teach the word of God. So, if they were to run a food

program for the widows, that would take them away from studying God's word, praying and preparing their teachings.

The Holy Spirit gave the apostles great wisdom to know how to deal with this problem. They told the believers to choose seven men to help. They weren't to choose just anyone. They were to look for certain character traits in these men.

Acts 6:3-4

*And so, brothers, select seven men who are **well respected** and are **full of the Spirit and wisdom**. We will give them this responsibility. Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."*

Ask: What character traits were they to look for?

They needed to be well respected and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

Ask: Why do you think it would be important for God's servants to have these characteristics?

They needed men of good character because they would have an important responsibility. They would be collecting money from some believers and giving it to the widows. They needed wisdom to know how best to serve these women in a way that pleased God.

What the apostles said to do was pleasing to all the believers. So, they prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to show them which men to choose.

Acts 6:5-6

*Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: **Stephen** (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). (6) These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.*

Because the apostles took care of the situation immediately, the widows in the church were taken care of, the conflict among the believers stopped, and God's work continued without interruption.

Acts 6:7

So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

The church continued to grow; even some of the Jewish priests came to faith in Jesus!

Each person in the family of God has a job to do. When everyone is doing their job, God's work continues and more people are saved and the Body of Christ continues to grow.

These seven men were the very first *deacons* chosen to serve in the early church. Their job was to help people in the church who had needs. They were the ones who took the money that was donated and then distributed it to the poor and needy. If someone was hungry, they made sure the person got food. These men served the Body of Christ, the family of believers, by helping others and allowing the apostles to do the very important job of teaching God's word to others.

[Teacher, explain the organization of your church leadership (the pastor, elders, and deacons) and what their main "jobs" are.]

Just as in the early church the apostles were to take care of people's spiritual needs and the deacons were to take care of people's physical needs, today we have elders and deacons. The elders (like the apostles) are to study God's word so they can teach the people and counsel them from God's word and to pray for them.

Ask: Do you know how our deacons serve the believers in our church? (Repair and maintenance on the building, plunge a blocked toilette, change light bulbs, mow the lawn, clean the church, etc.)

Ask: How do deacons help the pastor and elders focus on teaching and preaching God's word and prayer?

If the pastor had to do everything in the church, he would not have enough time for studying God's Word and praying for the people.

Ask: What are some of the needs people have in our church? [Allow discussion: perhaps an elderly person needs help doing yardwork, a new mother needs help cleaning her home, a sick person needs meals, or a lonely person just needs a friend.]

We each have a responsibility to serve other believers with the gifts and talents that God has given us.

Ask: What are some other ways you could serve others at our church? (Pick up trash, help in the nursery, help your Sunday school teacher setup or clean up after class, etc.)

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for the wisdom You gave the apostles to choose others to help them in their ministry of the word of God. We all want to be used by You to be a blessing to others here at church. Help us to desire to have the wonderful character that these first deacons had. They were well respected and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Encourage us to live our lives in a way that pleases You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Draw Dice

Teams will answer review questions and roll a die to complete a simple drawing of a mouse to win.



For a correctly answered question, teammate rolls one die, to determine what part of the body they can draw on the white board. First team that finishes their mouse wins.

To begin drawing their mouse, each team must wait until they roll a six. Then they can draw other body parts according to these numbers (write on board for everyone to see):

- 6 = body
- 5 = nose
- 4 = whiskers
- 3 = eyes
- 2 = ears
- 1 = tail

Use the following questions in a game or discussion:

1. In what ways does Satan try to snuff out the church? (He causes enemies from the outside to come against Christians and he causes conflict within the church, among fellow believers.)
2. What is a widow and what problems did they have in Bible times? (A widow is a woman whose husband died. They would have no way to make a living to buy food and pay rent, etc.)
3. As the church in Jerusalem was growing, what problem came up? (Greek-speaking believers felt their widows were overlooked.)
4. What solution did the apostles come up with to solve the conflict between the Greek-speaking believers and the Hebrew-speaking believers? (They chose seven men to oversee the food distribution program.)
5. What character traits were they looking for in the men they chose to help care for the widows? (They needed to be men who were well respected full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.)
6. Why do you think it would be important for God's servants to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom? (They would have an important

responsibility and needed wisdom to know how best to serve these women.)

7. What were the apostles supposed to be focused on and what were the deacons supposed to be focused on? (The apostles were to take care of people's spiritual needs; the deacons were to take care of people's physical needs.)
8. How do deacons help a pastor focus on teaching and preaching God's word and prayer? (The pastor doesn't have to take the time to do what the deacons are called to do.)
9. How does verse 5 describe Stephen? (He was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.)
10. What was the result when they chose these seven men to help? (God's Word spread and many more people believed in Jesus.)
11. What is one way you could serve others at our church?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Stoning of Stephen

(Acts 6:8—7:60)

Introduction

We've been learning that the early Christians suffered persecution.

Ask: What is *persecution*? (To be *persecuted* means to be treated with meanness or cruelty because of what you believe.)

Peter and John were put into jail because they were teaching and preaching Jesus and were told not to ever speak about Jesus again.

The bible clearly tells us that anyone who follows Him will suffer persecution. (See Matthew 10:16-23, Matthew 24:9, 2 Timothy 3:12, and Revelation 2:10.)

Ask: What sorts of persecution could you expect to receive if people found you were one of His followers?

Sometimes it can be hard to be a Jesus follower. People might laugh at you or make fun of you or call you all kinds of names. You might lose a friendship or perhaps not be included in a special event at school (picked for a game or for a part in a play).

Here in America some people have been told not to mention Jesus' name in public. But it can be much worse in some other countries where you could be put in prison or even put to death if people found out you were a follower of Jesus.

Well, you have two choices: You can either avoid speaking up about your faith and pretend you are not a believer in Jesus. Or, you can boldly share your faith in Jesus and risk the consequences.

Matthew 10:32-33 [do a "sword drill" for these verses!]

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Ask: What is that telling you?

We must learn trust the Holy Spirit to give us courage when we face difficulties, the words to say to people, and protection.

This morning we have a lesson about a person who did not allow fear of suffering to keep him from speaking boldly about Jesus to people who didn't want to believe that He was the Son of God.

Opening Prayer

Father, we never want to be afraid to tell other people about Jesus. Please help us to trust that You will always give us just the right words to share with people. And help us not to worry about how people are going to respond. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. (Luke 6:22)

[Revile = speak evil against you; mock; insult]

Lesson

Last week we met a man named Stephen. He was one of the seven men chosen to help distribute food to the widows.

Ask: How does Acts 6:5 describe Stephen? (He was *a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.*)

Today we are going to learn more about Stephen. Let's begin where we left off last week with verse 8:

Acts 6:8

*Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, **performed amazing miracles** and signs among the people.*

Ask: What evidence do we have that Stephen was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?

He performed amazing miracles among the people. Stephen was used of God because he was full of faith and the power of Holy Spirit.

A man in his own strength cannot perform a miracle; only God can perform a miracle. But He works through people to accomplish His works by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God doesn't work through just anyone, the person must be full of faith, as it says Stephen was in verse 5. Stephen was fully convinced that it was God working through him. Only by allowing the Holy Spirit to have full control of our lives, can the Holy Spirit use our lips to speak His words, our minds to think His thoughts, and our bodies to go and do what He wants us to do.

Those things that seem impossible for us to do, such as speak boldly about Jesus, or be kind to our enemies, are possible when the Holy Spirit lives in our heart and is allowed to control us.

We have been seeing that God's enemy, Satan, does all he can to stop God's work. God was using Stephen in a mighty way enabling people to see His power and Satan wanted to stop him.

Acts 6:9

*But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, **started to debate with him**. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia.*

[Teacher, show locations on map.]

The enemies of Jesus began to argue with Stephen. We do not read that Stephen argued back. But because Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, he had wisdom to know how to answer these men who were arguing with him.

Acts 6:10

None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

These evil men were not able to respond to the wisdom the Holy Spirit gave Stephen. Since they lost their argument with Stephen, they came up with a plan to try to get Stephen in trouble.

Acts 6:11-14

So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." (12) This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. (13) The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. (14) We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

[Teacher: "blaspheme" means *to speak evil of*.]

Stephen was being falsely accused, but the Holy Spirit inside his heart enabled him to have courage. As Stephen stood before the Jewish religious leaders, they saw something unusual about his appearance.

Acts 6:15

At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

Then in 7:1, the high priest asked Stephen if the things he was being accused of were true. Stephen answers him by giving a history lesson of God's work in the lives of His people. He tells the story of the unfaithfulness of God's people. He said that throughout history the Jews had rejected God's servants starting with Abraham to the present time.

His sermon goes on for a long time. Let's skip ahead to the end of the next chapter of Acts.

Acts 7:51-53

*"You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! (52) Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom **you betrayed and murdered**. (53) You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels."*

Wow! Stephen was accusing these Jewish religious leaders of being responsible for the murder of Jesus!

Ask: Do you think it was easy for Stephen to speak these words to Jesus' enemies?

Ask: How was Stephen able to say those truthful words with such courage? (He was filled with faith and the Holy Spirit.)

God's truth exposes people's sin. That's a good thing, because God wants people to recognize they are sinners so they will repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus for forgiveness. But when people have their sins exposed, it is very uncomfortable for them and some people do not react well.

As the Jewish religious leaders heard Stephen tell them they were guilty of murdering Jesus, they didn't respond in a positive way.

Acts 7:54

The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage.

Now Stephen was staring in the faces of angry people.

Ask: If you were standing before a group of angry people, what would you have done?

I'd probably be so fearful that I'd want to run away as fast as I could. But the Holy Spirit gave Stephen courage to do what we cannot do in our own power.

Acts 7:55-56

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. (56) And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

Stephen did not allow fear of these angry men to keep him from bringing honor to God. He continued to point these angry men to Jesus as the Son of God who was standing at the right hand of God.

Acts 7:57-58

Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him (58) and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

These were very angry, stubborn people who were still rejecting the Good News about Jesus. They rushed toward Stephen, grabbed him, and dragged him out of the city. They were so angry with Stephen and God's message; they all began to throw rocks at him.

Even as Stephen was suffering as a result of sharing God's truth, listen to his dying words...

Acts 7:59-60

As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (60) He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Remember Jesus' dying words, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" Because Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, he was able to respond in the same way Jesus did as He suffered on the cross.

In our study of Acts the persecution of believers has gone beyond being put in jail and commanded not to teach in Jesus' Name. The persecution has risen to the level of having followers of Jesus put to death. Stephen's death would not be the last for believers who share the Good News about Jesus.

This lesson seems to have a sad ending but it doesn't. Stephen was stoned to death but he was not alone as he suffered, He saw Jesus in heaven waiting for him. Stephen left his life on earth and went to heaven to spend eternity with his Savior Jesus.

You and I can be comforted that if we are believers, the Holy Spirit lives inside of our hearts. Whatever God asks us to do while serving Him on this earth we will have the power to do because He lives inside of us. One day when we leave this earth, we will spend the rest of eternity with our Savior, Jesus Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we pray that we will always have the courage to stand up for You. We don't want to be afraid of what others are thinking of us. Help us in our weakness to remember that You are with us and that You will always give us the words we need to say and the boldness to say it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Dodge the Question

Divide the children into two groups. Have one group form a large circle and instruct the other group to stand inside the circle. Give the outside circle a nerf ball. Then tell the children inside the circle to dodge the ball. If a child is hit, he must answer one of the review questions and then join the other circle. Play continues in this manner. Groups exchange places when the last child has been hit; winners are those last to be hit

Use the following questions in a game or discussion:

1. Who was a man full of God's grace and power? (Stephen)
2. Why couldn't Stephen's enemies win their argument against him? (They could not respond to the wisdom given to him by the Holy Spirit. They had nothing to say!)

3. When the Jewish religious leaders looked at Stephen's face, what did they see? (A face of an angel.)
4. Why did Stephen tell his enemies about God's history with the Jews? (He was reminding them that the Jews have always rejected God's servants just like they rejected and murdered Jesus.)
5. How was Stephen able to be bold to speak the truth to his enemies? (The Holy Spirit gave him courage.)
6. As the Jewish religious leaders were raging against him, what did Stephen tell them he saw? ("*Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!*")
7. What did the Jewish religious leader do when Stephen told them he saw a vision of Jesus at the right hand of God? (They put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.)
8. What does it mean "to stone him"? (They pelted Stephen with big rocks until he died. Stoning is meant to be a slow, painful, and deliberate form of capital punishment.)
9. What did Stephen say as they stoned him? (As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" Then he fell to his knees, shouting, "*Lord, don't charge them with this sin!*")
10. How can this lesson help you stand up for Jesus?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Persecution Scatters the Church

(Acts 8:1-25)

Introduction

Our verse for today was Jesus' final instructions to His followers before He returned to heaven. We call this the "great commission." He commanded His disciples to go out into all the world and tell them the Good News.

Ask: What is the Good News Jesus wants us to broadcast to the world? (Jesus died for our sins.)

The very heart of our faith in Jesus is that He came and died in our place on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve for the sin we commit. Isn't it good news that we can be saved?

Jesus wants everyone in all the world to know the message of salvation. So, He told His disciples to spread the news about Him from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. [Teacher, use a Bible map to point out these places.]

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be in the center of Your will for our lives. That means we need the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can go out and tell the world that You came to save sinners from eternal separation from You. Please fill us to overflowing with Your power so that we can be bold witnesses for You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
(Acts 1:8 NLT)

Lesson

We have seen exciting things happen in Jerusalem after God sent the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Many people believed in Jesus and were saved from their sins. As a result of the mighty works God was doing in Jerusalem, Satan, God's enemy, tried to stop people from believing in Jesus.

Ask: What did the religious leaders do to the apostles to try to get them to stop teaching in the Name of Jesus? (Put them in jail, beat them, and commanded them not to speak in the Name of Jesus.)

In last week's lesson, God's enemies took even more drastic measures to silence the message of the Good News.

Ask: What happened to Stephen when he boldly spoke to the Jewish religious leaders? (He was stoned to death.)

Stephen didn't die in fear of God's enemies because he knew he was not alone; right before he died, he saw heaven open and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!

Up to this time, all the people who had come to faith in Jesus lived in Jerusalem. But God knew people outside of Jerusalem needed to hear the Good News, too. So, He had a plan to scatter the people.

God raised up a man by the name of Saul to help make that happen. We were first introduced to Saul last week when Stephen was getting stoned to death. Let's look back at Acts 7:58.

Acts 7:58

... [Stephen's] accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Ask: What was Saul doing when the religious leaders stoned Stephen?

Saul gathered the coats of the men who stoned Stephen.

Now we meet Saul again in chapter 8, verse 1, where it tells us that Saul approved of Stephen's execution. Saul was standing there watching when Stephen was stoned to death, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

Ask: Why would Saul approve of stoning Stephen to death?

Saul was not an evil person; he was actually in training to become a Pharisee. And, his teachers, the Jewish religious leaders, taught him that Christians were dangerous. So, he believed that getting rid of Christians was a good thing!

Ask: Why did they think Christians were dangerous?

The Christians were going against everything they were teaching the people and it was disrupting the order of their beliefs. The problem was that the Jewish religious leaders did not believe all that the scriptures had written about the coming of the Messiah. That's why they didn't recognize that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Let's read the rest of verse 1:

Acts 8:1

Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria.

After Stephen's death, great persecution broke out against the believers.

Acts 8:3

*But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, **dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.***

Ask: What was Saul doing to silence the Christians living in Jerusalem?

Saul was going house to house rounding up the believers and throwing them into prison. Imagine sitting at your table with your family and Saul busts down your door and drags you and your family off to jail. This would be scary, wouldn't it?

The people were so scared, they packed up and left Jerusalem and moved out into the surrounding areas.

As the people moved away from Jerusalem, they began to share the Good News with their new neighbors.

Acts 8:4

But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.

Believers who were scattered, preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. God used this difficulty in the lives of the believers so others could learn about Jesus!

God can use the difficult circumstances in our lives for His purposes, too!

Next, we meet a man named Philip, another one of the seven men chosen to care for the widows.

Acts 8:5

Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah.

Over the years, Israel had been conquered and ruled by a lot of different countries. The Samaritans were Jews that had intermarried with the other cultures and had corrupted the worship of the only true God by mixing it with false teachings and magic.

Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies; they hated each other. The Jews from Judea would not have anything to do with Samaritans. In fact, Jewish people normally would go out of their way to avoid going through Samaria on their way between Galilee to Judea. [Teacher, use Bible map.]

But Philip didn't allow this hatred between Jews and Samaritans to keep him from obeying God's command to take the message of salvation to Samaria. Here we are told that Philip went to Samaria specifically to tell people there about Jesus.

Acts 8:6-8

*Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. (7) **Many evil spirits were cast out**, screaming as they left their victims. **And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed.** (8) So there was great joy in that city.*

At first the Samaritans wanted to hear what Philip had to say because he was performing many miracles. It says, “*Many evil spirits were cast out and many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed.*”

Then, when they understood Philip’s message that Jesus was God’s Son who had come into this world to save sinners, many people came to faith and were filled with great joy.

Before Philip shared the Good News with these people, there was a man named Simon who was a magician.

Acts 8:9-11

A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. (10) Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as “the Great One—the Power of God.” (11) They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

For many years Simon had amazed the Samaritans with his magic tricks. The people followed Simon because they thought he had God’s power.

When the people met Philip, they could tell that Simon was just tricking them. They could see that Philip had the real power of God.

Acts 8:12

But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized.

Satan tries to deceive people with tricks to keep them from believing the truth about the one true God. When these people heard the truth about Jesus and saw God’s true power working through Philip, they believed by faith that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior of the World. Even Simon the sorcerer could see that it was God’s power working through Philip.

Acts 8:13

Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

We will talk more about Simon in a minute...

Acts 8:14-17

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. (15) As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. (16) The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Peter and John prayed for these new Samaritan believers that they, too, would receive the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel is for everyone everywhere who believes in Jesus.

Now back to Simon. We left off in verse 13 where it says that he believed and was baptized. Let’s see if he truly believed in Jesus.

Acts 8:18-19

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. (19) “Let me have this power, too,” he exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!”

Ask: Why did Simon want the power of the Holy Spirit?

Simon had been popular because he had impressed people with his magic tricks. Now he was losing his popularity when people began to believe in Jesus. Simon was jealous of the apostles and wanted this same ability to have people follow him. He thought he could buy God's power. He wanted Jesus to help him to be famous like the apostles were. But Jesus wants people to make God's Name famous.

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the wisdom to know that Simon had evil motives for desiring the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:20-23

But Peter replied, "May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! (21) You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. (22) Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, (23) for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin."

After hearing Peter's rebuke, Simon didn't ask for God's forgiveness; he asked Peter to pray that the bad things that Peter said would not happen to him.

Acts 8:24

"Pray to the Lord for me," Simon exclaimed, "that these terrible things you've said won't happen to me!"

Ask: Verse 13 said, "Then Simon himself believed and was baptized." Do you think Simon was a true believer? (No!)

Simon was more worried about his own reputation than he was about God's. He was clearly a false believer.

You might meet someone who says they are a believer but has not truly put their trust in Jesus. We need to have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to be able to tell the difference.

Acts 8:25

After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News.

Peter and John returned to Jerusalem and as they travelled, they shared the Good News in many Samaritan villages on their way.

Today we learned that as the Jerusalem believers faced persecution, it was God's way of moving them out of the city and into the world.

God will use the circumstances in your life to move you where He wants you to go. Difficulties can make us a stronger believer and more useful for God's work.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, sometimes You use difficulties in our lives so that other people can get to know You. I pray that we will not be afraid when we hit a bump on our journey through life. Help us trust that You are always leading and directing us so that we are most useful to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Opposition to the Faith game

Preparation: Create a 24" dartboard for a floor game with three circles. Note: it works best if you use fabric like felt so the marbles don't roll so fast. Make the bullseye an 8" circle and the secondary circle 16". Label the bullseye, "Jerusalem" (10 points), the middle circle "Judea" (20 points), the outer circle "Samaria" (50 points), and label the area off the dartboard as "The Ends of the Earth" (100 points).



Place some marbles in the center of the dartboard on the bullseye. Use another marble as the “shooter”.

Play: After correctly answering a review question, the player uses his thumb to flick the “shooter” from the edge of the dartboard into the bullseye to scatter the marbles placed there.

After each turn, add up the points based on where the marbles have rolled. Then gather the marbles and return them to the bullseye for the next person to scatter.

Tell the kids that the object is to have as many marbles as possible land outside of Jerusalem. Tally the points for each team.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Why did Jewish leaders think that Christians were dangerous? (They thought Christians were causing disturbances and riots.)
2. In what way did the persecution help to spread the news of Jesus to remote areas of the earth? (Forced people to run for their lives.)
3. What can we learn about how God works from this example of the early church? (He works through hard circumstances in our lives.)
4. What is the “great commission”? (Jesus commanded His disciples to go out into all the world and tell them the Good News.)
5. What is the “Good News”? (That Jesus came and died for our sins.)
6. Why did Saul approve of Stephen’s death? (Stephen’s death pleased Saul because he did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah.)
7. What was Saul doing to silence the Christians living in Jerusalem? (He was dragging people out of their homes and throwing them into prison for believing in Jesus.)
8. How did the people respond to the persecution they were experiencing in Jerusalem? (The people were so scared, they packed up and left Jerusalem and moved out into the surrounding areas.)
9. What good thing came about because the people moved out of Jerusalem into the surrounding areas? (They began to share the Good News with their new neighbors.)
10. Where did Philip go to preach the gospel? (Samaria)
11. Why were the Jews and the Samaritans such bitter enemies? (The Samaritans were Jews that had intermarried with the other cultures and had corrupted the worship of the only true God by mixing it with false teachings and magic.)
12. How did the Samaritans respond to Philip’s message about Jesus? (They believed.)
13. Why did the people come out to hear Philip? (At first the people wanted to hear what Philip had to say because he was performing many miracles.)
14. Why did people come out to hear Simon? (He was a magician and had amazed people with his magic tricks.)
15. What happened when Philip told the people the truth about Jesus? (When these people understood the truth about Jesus, and saw God’s power working through Philip, they believed by faith that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior of the World.)
16. Verse 13 says, “*Simon himself believed and was baptized*”. Do you think he was a true believer? Why or why not? (Simon offered Peter and John money to buy the power of the Holy Spirit; he obviously did not understand the true gospel. Then, after Peter scolded him, Simon didn’t ask for God’s forgiveness; he asked Peter to pray for him.)

17. What does it mean to “believe in Jesus”? (It means that you trust that what He did on the cross satisfied the Father’s anger (wrath) against your sin.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Philip Preaches to the Ethiopian Man

(Acts 8:26-40)

Introduction

[Teacher, bring a boxed cake mix to class.]

This cake mix has important instructions on it. Why is it important to follow instructions? What do you think could happen if you didn't do what it tells you to do? What if you forgot to turn on the oven? Or, if you used motor oil instead of cooking oil?

When some people cook, they don't always follow a recipe. They think they know what they are doing and go off and do their own thing. That doesn't always work out for them.

One time I made a cake and forgot to put the eggs in. Boy, was I shocked when I took the cake out of the oven and not only was it flat as a pancake, but it weighed a ton! It was a complete failure!

God has important instructions for us, as well. Where do you find out what they are? The Bible is His instruction manual. This is where we can find out what our purpose in life is and what we are supposed to do to please Him. As we read His word, we learn to recognize His voice so we'll know when He is speaking to us. Reading your Bible should be very important to you.

Opening Prayer

Father, In the Bible, You say that Your followers are like sheep who know their shepherd's voice and follow him. Just like those little lambs, I want to recognize Your voice so that when you speak to me as I read my Bible, I will know it is You who is calling me and directing me and guiding me. Then, I pray, You will give me a desire to follow Your instructions. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)

Lesson

As believers, we belong to God and He has work for each one of us to do. In order to do God's work, we need to listen for His voice and obey His directions every day.

Last week we learned about a man named Philip who heard God tell him to go to Samaria and share the Good News about Jesus. When the people understood Philip's message that Jesus was God's Son who had come into this world to save sinners, many believed and were filled with great joy.

Today we will learn about another time Philip heard God's instructions and immediately obeyed.

Acts 8:26

As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Ask: What did the angel of the Lord tell Philip to do? (Leave Jerusalem and head down to the Gaza strip.) [Teacher, use a Bible map.]

He did not wait to obey the Lord. He didn't ask questions or argue with God. He didn't tell God he would do it later, he immediately did what God told him to do.

Ask: When your parents tell you to do something, do you obey immediately or do you make excuses? Perhaps you say you will obey, but then go off to do something else and forget to do what they told you to do? When you please your parents, you are pleasing God.

Now, if your parents tell you to do something that you know would not be pleasing to God, then what should you do? You should do your best not to offend God. He is the higher authority.

Philip obeyed God's instructions immediately and began walking down the desert road towards Gaza. Suddenly he heard the rumblings of horses and a chariot coming in his direction. Sitting in that chariot was a man all the way from Ethiopia, a country in Africa.

Acts 8:27-28

So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, (28) and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

[Teacher, a *eunuch* is a castrated man placed in a position of authority in a palace.]

The man was an important official in his country. He handled all the money for the Queen of Ethiopia. We think that this man was a convert to Judaism because he had traveled all the way from Africa to Jerusalem to worship God. Now he was heading back home.

He was not yet a believer in Jesus, but we know he was seeking to know God. To travel all the way from Africa to Jerusalem to worship God, shows he had a desire to know God. And, as we will see, he was studying the Bible and was eager to receive answers to his questions.

While the Ethiopian was traveling in his chariot, the Holy Spirit told Philip to catch up with him.

Acts 8:29-31

The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." (30) Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (31) The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

Running alongside the chariot, Philip heard the Ethiopian reading from the book of Isaiah and asked him if he understood what he was

reading. The man told Philip that he did not and then invited Philip to sit in the chariot with him.

Acts 8:32-33

The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. (33) He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

Ask: Who do you think Isaiah was writing about? (Jesus)

The Ethiopian wanted to know who the Prophet Isaiah was writing about and this gave Philip the perfect opportunity to tell him about Jesus.

Acts 8:34-35

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" (35) So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

When the Ethiopian understood Philip's message that Jesus was God's Son who had come into this world to save sinners, he wanted to be baptized to show that he truly believed.

Acts 8:36-38

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" [(37) Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] (38) He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

[Teacher, some translations of the Bible omit verse 37.]

The Ethiopian gave orders for the chariot to stop. He and Philip climbed out and Philip took the man down to the water and baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away.

Acts 8:39-40

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. (40) Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea.

Because Philip was obedient to the Lord and immediately headed down to Gaza, this Ethiopian man's life was changed forever. Now he would go back to his country as a believer in Jesus Christ. We have no idea how many people's lives were changed in Ethiopia because of this man's faith in Jesus.

Ask: What do you think might have happened if Philip didn't immediately obey the Holy Spirit? What if he told the Lord, I'll do it later? He might have missed the chariot and the Ethiopian would have returned to his country never hearing the Good News about Jesus.

Ask: Can you see how important it is to obey God's voice immediately?

We must learn to listen carefully for God's instruction and be quick to obey what He tells us to do.

Since God wants you to learn to listen and obey Him, you might want to practice listening and obeying your parents. 😊

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we do not want to miss any opportunities to tell people about You. Help us learn to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit as He leads and directs our life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Around the World

Have the students sit in a circle. The first two students pair off against each other and remain seated. You ask a question, and whoever runs up to a bell (or buzzer) and rings it first, attempts to answer the question. If the child answers correctly, he moves to the next contestant, at which point the losing student sits in the seat of the person who bested him. The goal is to move as many seats as possible before losing.

The game ideally continues until one student makes it "around the world" and gets all the way back to his own seat. Often, though, the game simply ends when time is up, and the person who traveled the farthest wins

Use the following questions in a game or discussion:

1. Where can a believer find God's instructions for life? (The Bible.)
2. What did the angel of the Lord tell Philip to do? (Leave Jerusalem and head down to the Gaza strip.)
3. How quickly did Philip obey the Lord? (He obeyed immediately.)
4. Who did Philip come across when he traveled on the desert road to Gaza? (An Ethiopian riding in a chariot.)
5. What do you know about this Ethiopian? (He was a man of great authority working for the Queen of Ethiopia as the treasurer. He had been to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning to his country. He drove a chariot. He was reading the Book of Isaiah.)
6. In this passage of Scripture that the Ethiopian was reading, who was Isaiah writing about? (Jesus)

7. How did Philip help the Ethiopian man? (He explained the Bible to him and how Jesus was the promised Savior that was written about in Isaiah.)
8. What did the Ethiopian want to do when they came to some water? (Be baptized.)
9. Why did the Ethiopian want to be baptized? (He wanted to show that he truly believed in Jesus.)
10. Who took Philip away so the Ethiopian didn't see him anymore? (The Spirit of the Lord.)
11. Why was it important that Philip immediately obeyed the Lord? (The man may not have heard the Good News and been saved.)
12. What would have happened if Philip hadn't followed the instructions the angel of the Lord gave him? How might the story have been different?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Saul Becomes a Believer

(Acts 9:1-22)

Introduction

Alternate Introduction

Have an adult dressed like Saul and carrying scrolls come storming into the class room saying, "My name is Saul, and I have letters giving me permission to arrest those who believe in Jesus. I can't imagine how anybody could believe that He is really the Son of God and that He actually came back to life from the dead. These believers are causing nothing but trouble. They must be stopped!" Saul continues grumbling as he leaves the class room.

Regular Introduction

We have been learning that during the time just after Jesus returned to heaven, His followers suffered dreadful persecution. People were thrown into prison for telling others about Jesus; some were killed for their faith.

One of the chief persecutors was a man named Saul. Saul had stood by and watched men stone Stephen to death. Stephen was the first Christian to be killed for his faith in Jesus. (He was the first *martyr*.)

Wherever Saul went he uttered murderous threats against the followers of Jesus. How he hated them! From house to house he went, dragging out the believers and having them thrown into jail without good cause.

How frightening it must have been for the believers in the early church to have to face someone like Saul!

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that we live in a free country where we can freely worship You and study Your word. So, many Christians in the world today have to meet in secret, fearing for their lives! But we can walk

down the street with our Bibles; we can talk about You openly; we can have Christian concerts in public parks. Help us never to take this privilege for granted, Lord. Help us to be bold witnesses for You and take advantage of our freedom to tell people about You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Lesson

Hundreds of Christians had fled from the city of Jerusalem, and Saul was determined to track them down and bring them back. When Saul heard that some of the believers had traveled 150 miles away (a 6-day journey) to Damascus, he set off with troops to drag them back in chains. He was determined to wipe out Jesus' followers. But God had other plans for Saul!

Open your Bibles to Acts 9 where we pick up the story.

Acts 9:1-2

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. (2) He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

Saul went to the high priest for letters that would grant him permission to go to Damascus to arrest believers and take them back to Jerusalem to be put in prison.

Saul was a Pharisee. He knew the teachings of the Old Testament well. He thought he was pleasing God by trying to eliminate Christians! He did not believe that Jesus is God or that He had risen from the dead. He punished Jesus' followers because he thought they were teaching things against what he understood the Bible to teach. He was passionate about righteousness, but he didn't know the truth about God.

As Saul traveled along the road to Damascus, something incredible happened.

Acts 9:3-4

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

Saul and his men had nearly reached Damascus when suddenly, at about midday, there was a blinding flash of light in the sky and the Lord spoke to him and he fell to the ground.

Acts 9:5

"Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!"

God wanted Saul to know that Jesus had truly risen from the dead and so He met him on the road in this spectacular way! In this dramatic moment, Saul believed that Jesus was the Christ, the One God had promised in the scriptures to send to save everyone from their sins.

Even though Saul had persecuted Christians and even thrown them into prison to be put to death, because of God's great love for Saul, God showed him that Jesus really is alive!

God wants to do that for every human being that ever lived. God is full of mercy and grace. He doesn't want anyone to die and go to hell. He wants all people to come to believe the Good News! And, He does everything He can to get everybody's attention! No one is without excuse for not coming to believe in Jesus! (Romans 1:18-21)

Acts 9:6-7

Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (7) The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one!

Saul was blinded by the light.

Acts 9:8-9

*Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes **he was blind**. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. (9) He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.*

Saul's soldiers probably saw him stagger to his feet. They had to lead him like a blind man to Damascus. After three days, God sent help.

Acts 9:10-12

Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord!" he replied. (11) The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. (12) I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

Ask: What do you think was going through Ananias' mind at this point?

He was probably awe struck by having a vision of the Lord speaking to him; it's not every day we have an actual conversation with the Creator of the universe! Also, he was probably afraid to face Saul because he had a bad reputation for persecuting the believers. Ananias was probably terrified.

Ask: If you had been Ananias and God told you to go to visit Saul, how would you feel?

Acts 9:13-16

"But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! (14) And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name." (15) But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. (16) And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

It must have been scary, but Ananias was obedient to the Lord and went to Saul.

We must obey and follow God's leading, even when he leads us to difficult people and places.

Acts 9:17-19

So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (18) Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. (19) Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days.

That day, Saul's body received a healing and his mind received a healing as well. As the scales (like crusty coverings) fell from his eyes, Saul was able to see both physically and spiritually. As a sign of his conversion, Saul was baptized and began his new life as God's chosen apostle.

God had sent Ananias to encourage Saul and give him exciting news. Ananias told this new believer about the special plans that God had for his life (see verse 15).

God has special plans for your life, too. God promises to lead us and guide us every day. He will direct our steps if we just ask Him to show us the way and trust that His way is the best for us.

Saul, now a believer, is full of the Holy Spirit and began to boldly preach the Good News about Jesus, how He came and died for our sins, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven.

Acts 9:20-22

And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!" (21) All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?" (22) Saul's

preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Saul had been a persecutor of Christians and that angered the Christians. Now he boldly taught people that Jesus is the Promised Savior. But this now angered the Jews. They got together and decided to kill Saul!

Acts 9:23-24

After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. (24) They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot.

Saul's new Christian friends learned about this plot and came up with a plan to save Saul.

Acts 9:25

So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

Saul then returned to Jerusalem and wanted to visit with the other believers living there.

Acts 9:26

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer!

Poor Saul! The believers there were scared to death! All they knew about Saul was he was a man who tried to destroy the church and threw believers in jail. They thought that Saul was trying to trick them into believing he had changed.

Acts 9:27-29

Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus. (28) So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all

around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him.

Barnabas encouraged the believers in Jerusalem to trust that Saul was a true believer. And Saul continued to preach boldly in Jerusalem.

But once again his life was in danger from the Jews who wanted to kill him.

Acts 9:30

When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

His friends took him away from Jerusalem, put him on a ship and sent him back to his home town of Tarsus to stay for a while. [Use map.]

Let's see what happened to the church once Saul is out of the way...

Acts 9:31

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

After Saul left for Tarsus, the believers in Israel enjoyed a time of peace. The Holy Spirit encouraged and strengthened the believers and the church continued to grow; more and more people believed in Jesus.

As we continue our study through the Book of Acts, we will learn more and more about Saul. We will see how God used this once persecutor of believers to boldly share the Good News even though he faced many difficulties.

What a strange twist of fate for Saul, who set out to destroy Christianity, to suddenly become the most well-known of all God's apostles. Did you know that most of the New Testament was written by this same man, whose name was changed from Saul to Paul?

In His sovereignty, God can take even the most hateful of all people and turn them around for His own good purposes! [Teacher, review today's memory verse.]

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You are so good and so full of mercy and grace. You took this man, Saul, who was persecuting people who believed in You, and you changed him from the inside out. You loved him, even when he was a murderer and a hater, and you used him in a mighty way to teach people about your grace. Help us to be as loving and forgiving of others as You are with us! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Pass the Chicken (or another stuffed animal)

Sit with your students in a circle. One receives a question while a rubber chicken is passed around the circle. The student must answer the question correctly before the chicken comes back around to them.

Fact or Fiction

When an answer is fiction ask student for correct answer:

1. Saul was a Sadducee who knew the teachings of the Bible. (Fiction, he was a Pharisee.)
2. Saul was traveling to Damascus to visit his sick grandmother. (Fiction, he was traveling to Damascus to imprison believers.)
3. Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting Him? (Fact)
4. The men travelling with Jesus heard the voice speaking from Heaven. (Fact)

5. Saul fasted (did not eat or drink) for four days. (Fact)
 6. Saul was blinded and sat at the home of Judas for three days. (Fact)
 7. God told Sapphira to go to Damascus and restore Saul's sight. (Fiction, the man's name was Ananias.)
 8. Ananias was excited to go to Saul because he had heard so much about him. (Fiction, he was scared of Saul.)
 9. The Lord told Ananias that Saul was to share the Good News to the Gentiles. (Fact)
 10. Saul was baptized and then immediately something like scales fell from his eyes. (Fiction, he regained his sight then was baptized.)
 11. Saul preached the Good News boldly and everyone loved him. (Fiction, some wanted to kill him.)
 12. Saul was let down through a hole in the wall in a basket. (Fact)
 13. The Jews in Jerusalem were glad to meet Saul because they had heard he had radically changed. (Fiction, they were all afraid of him; they did not believe he was a true disciple.)
 14. Barnabas defended Saul and told the disciples in Jerusalem that Saul had preached Jesus in Damascus. (Fact)
 15. The Greek-speaking Jews tried to murder Saul. (Fact)
 16. Once the disciples sent Saul away, the church had peace and began to grow. (Fact)
 17. God can transform a person's life when they believe in Jesus. (Fact)
 18. God only has work for some followers to do. (Fiction, believers are His workmanship created for good works.)
- Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:
1. Why did Paul travel to Damascus? (To find Christians to take back to Jerusalem to put in prison.)
 2. What did Jesus ask Saul when He suddenly appear to him on the road to Damascus? (*Saul, why are you persecuting me?*)
 3. What did the men travelling with Saul see and hear when the Lord appeared to Saul? (They heard the voice but didn't see anyone.)
 4. What happened to Saul after speaking with the Lord? (He became blind and for 3 days he fasted.)
 5. The Lord appeared to a man named Ananias in a vision. What did the Lord tell Ananias to do? (Go to Saul, pray for him that he may regain his sight.)
 6. Why was it scary for Ananias to obey the Lord? (He'd heard about Saul and knew he was the one that was capturing Christians and throwing them into prison.)
 7. What was the first thing Saul did after he regained his sight? (He was baptized.)
 8. What did Saul's friends do when he found out that the Jews were plotting to kill him? (They helped him escape by lowering Saul through a hole in the wall in a basket.)
 9. When Saul returned to Jerusalem he met up with the apostles, but they didn't believe that Saul was now a believer. Who spoke up for him? (Barnabas defended Saul.)
 10. Because Saul was boldly preaching the Good News, the Jews in Jerusalem wanted to kill him. How did he escape this time? (His friends took him to Caesarea and put him on a ship to Tarsus.)
 11. Once the disciples sent Saul away, what happened to the church? (It had peace and began to grow.)
 12. What did the church experience after Saul was sent to Tarsus? (Peace and growth.)

Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Tabitha

(Acts 9:32-43)

Introduction

Ask: Do you know what a spiritual gift is?

A spiritual gift is an extraordinary power given to you by the Holy Spirit when you become a believer in Jesus. God gives each of us spiritual gifts so that we can use them to be a blessing to others and to help unbelievers come to faith in Jesus. You have at least one spiritual gift. These are things like:

[Teacher, list the spiritual gifts on the whiteboard as you give the students a simplified description of them. You will use this list of gifts later during the game.]

Spiritual Gift	Description
ADMINISTRATION	Helping people work together.
ENCOURAGEMENT	Inspiring other people to do the right thing.
FAITH	Believing that God can do anything (move mountains).
GIVING	Joy in providing money and other things to help in God's work.
HEALING	Curing people miraculously.
MERCY	Having compassion for people who are suffering or are lonely.
PREACHING/EVANGELISM	Ability to boldly share the gospel.
SERVICE/HELPS	Seeing people's needs and being willing to do things no one else will do (clean toilets).

TEACHING	Explaining God's Word so that others understand it.
WISDOM	Having God's understanding.

Our human body has different parts that work together to make our bodies work properly. If we were missing any part of our physical body, such as our legs, the other parts of our body have to work harder to do the work that the missing parts would do.

Just like our physical body, the Body of Christ is made up of believers with gifts and talents that help the church work properly. If every believer is using the gift God has given them, all the believers will be working together to accomplish God's will.

Today we'll see how God gave spiritual gifts to His followers to be a blessing to others and to help unbelievers come to faith in Jesus.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You have given us spiritual gifts that we can use to be a blessing to others and to help unbelievers come to faith in You. Help us to desire spiritual gifts and to recognize them in each other. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Peter 4:10)

Lesson

We have been studying the Book of Acts. At the end of our last lesson we learned that Saul was sent to Tarsus [show on a map]. While Saul was in Tarsus, God continued to use the Apostle Peter.

Acts 9:32-33

Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. (33) There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years.

[Teacher, show Lydda on a map.]

Ask: What do you think it would have been like for Aeneas [Un-neehs] to be paralyzed and in bed for 8 years? [Allow responses. Helpless; dependent.]

Acts 9:34

Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!" And he was healed instantly.

God used Peter to heal Aeneas.

Notice that Peter didn't say, "*I am the apostle Peter and by my authority and power I heal you.*" He knew that healing is a miracle that only God can do.

Let's see why God gave Peter the spiritual gift of healing.

Acts 9:35

*Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and **they turned to the Lord.***

When people living in Lydda and Sharon saw Peter use the spiritual gift of healing, they turned to the Lord.

The same is true for you. When other people see you using the spiritual gifts that God has given you, they will see God's power at work and will want to turn to Him for themselves.

As Peter continued to visit with the believers in Lydda, there was a believer named Tabitha who lived in Joppa. [Locate Joppa on a map.]

Let's read how Tabitha used her spiritual gifts to serve the Lord.

Acts 9:36

There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha which in Greek is Dorcas. She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor.

Tabitha had the spiritual gift of serving. God made her aware of the needs of others and she was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. One of the ways she helped poor widows was by making them clothes.

But one day Tabitha became sick and died so they prepared her body for burial.

Acts 9:37

About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room.

When believers in Joppa heard that Peter was nearby in Lydda, they sent two men with a message for him to come quickly to Tabitha's house.

Acts 9:38

But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

Ask: Why do you think they sent for Peter? (They had heard that God had given him the spiritual gift of healing.)

Peter went to Joppa with the two men and went upstairs to the room where Tabitha's body was placed.

Acts 9:39

So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them.

When Peter was in the room the widows were crying and showing him the clothes that Tabitha had made while she was alive. As her body lay lifeless, her good deeds were being remembered.

Peter sent everyone out of the room.

Acts 9:40-41

But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! (41) He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

Once again God used Peter to perform a powerful miracle. Peter could not raise a person from the dead in his own strength. He could only raise Tabitha because the Holy Spirit lived inside of him.

Let's see why God gave Peter the gift of healing.

Acts 9:42

*The news spread through the whole town, and **many believed in the Lord.***

As we saw with Aeneas' healing, when people in Joppa heard that Tabitha was raised from the dead many believed in Jesus.

Acts 9:43

And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides.

Peter and Tabitha both used the spiritual gifts that God had given them to serve others. And, when people saw the power of God, their faith grew.

The moment you believe, the Holy Spirit comes inside of your heart and gives you one or more spiritual gifts. When you use the gifts and talents God has given you, others will be inspired to know Jesus.

[Teacher, spend a few minutes talking about the spiritual gifts that God has given to each of the students in your class. Explain how they can use their gift to help strengthen other people's faith.]

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help me to know what my gifts are and then give me opportunity to use them for Your Name's sake and for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES**GAME CENTER*****Hedbanz***

Divide the class into teams. Write the names of the spiritual gifts on sticky notes to stick on a student's forehead. Seat one student with their back towards the whiteboard, so they cannot see the list of spiritual gifts and stick the name of a spiritual gift on their forehead.

The student then must ask his teammates for a clue as to what gift it is. The team must respond without using the term.

Either limit the number of clues or put a timer on it. If the student guesses the correct gift, their team gets 100 points.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who was Peter visiting in Lydda? (Believers)
2. Why was Aeneas bedridden? (Paralyzed)
3. How long was Aeneas bedridden? (Eight years)
4. Who healed Aeneas? (Jesus Christ)
5. When the people living in Lydda saw Aeneas walking what did they do? (Turned to the Lord)
6. Why did Peter go to Joppa? (2 men came and asked him to come quickly)

7. How did Tabitha live her life? (Always doing good and helping the poor)
8. What did the crying widows show Peter? (The clothes Tabitha had made for them)
9. How did the people respond to Tabitha being raised from the dead? (Many believed in Jesus)
10. What can you do this week to use the gifts God has given you?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Peter and Cornelius

(Acts 10:1-22)

Introduction

[Teacher, discuss “prejudice” (partiality or favoritism) with your students.]

Ask: Have you ever known someone that looked down on someone else because of the way they look or talk or because of where they are from? It is never God’s plan for you or me to look down on another person for any reason.

Have you heard the song, “Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World”? The song says, “Red, or yellow, black or white, they are precious in His sight.” God loves all people and He wants everyone to into His family.

In our lesson today, Peter is going to learn a very important lesson—a lesson that is important for us to learn, too.

Opening Prayer

Father, we are so thankful that You do not show favoritism. Reveal to each of us today if we have any forms of prejudice in our hearts. Cleanse our minds from this sinful thinking. We want our lives to be pleasing to You. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. (Acts 10:34-35 NLT)

Lesson

Open your Bible, to Acts 10.

Acts 10:1-2

*In **Caesarea** there lived a **Roman army officer** named **Cornelius**, who was a **captain of the Italian Regiment**. (2) He was a **devout, God-fearing man**, as was everyone in his household. He **gave generously to the poor** and **prayed regularly** to God.*

Ask: What do we learn about Cornelius from verses 1 and 2?

[Teacher notes: a *centurion* is an officer or commander in charge of up to 100 men. A *regiment* (or *cohort*) is an army troop or battalion of about 6,000 men. Centurions were chosen because they had noble character.]

Cornelius was not a Jew; he was a Gentile. (A Gentile is anyone that is not a Jew.) We are told he was a God-fearing man, gave generously to the poor, and prayed regularly. So, we know he lived a righteous life. But he had not heard the Good News that Jesus died on the cross for His sins.

Do you know that a person can live a good life, go to church, pray and even help others, but still not be saved? To be saved, you must have faith in what Jesus did on the cross to pay for your sins.

One day God spoke to Cornelius by sending an angel to speak to him while he was in prayer.

Acts 10:3-6

*One afternoon about three o’clock, he **had a vision** in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. “Cornelius!” the angel said. (4) Cornelius stared at him in terror. “What is it, sir?” he asked the angel. And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! (5) Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. (6) He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.”*

Even though Cornelius was not a believer, God was watching his life and He heard his prayers and sent some angels to speak to him.

God wants everyone to be saved. God told Cornelius to send for Peter.

Acts 10:7-8

As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants. (8) He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

Cornelius obeyed God right away and sent for Peter. God was also preparing Peter to meet with this Gentile.

You see, a devout Jew like Peter would never consider stepping into a Gentile's home, but this was God's plan.

The Israelites were God's chosen people. God had chosen them to be the ones to bring the Messiah, Jesus, into world. First God chose Abraham and told him to leave his home in Ur. Then God promised that He would give him the Promised Land and make his family into a great nation, more numerous than all the stars of the sky. God also promised Abraham that from his family line, the Savior would be born.

Later God gave His chosen people, the law with rules to follow to help them live their lives in a way that pleased Him. He wanted His chosen people to keep themselves pure and right so they could be a good example for the rest of the people in the world to follow.

The Jews knew that God wanted them to live a "set apart" life – different from the Gentiles. One of the ways that the Jews were different than the Gentiles was in the foods they were allowed to eat. For example, Jews were not permitted to eat anything that came from a pig such as bacon or pork chops.

It was also not permitted for Jews to have anything to do with Gentiles. They were not to enter their homes or eat with them.

God's plan was for the Jews was to be an example to the Gentiles to show them that God wants *all* people to live "set apart" lives.

Meanwhile, God gave Peter an amazing vision:

Acts 10:9-14

The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, (10) and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. (11) He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. (12) In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. (13) Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them." (14) "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean."

Peter had always followed God's laws and had never eaten any "unclean" animal. He was shocked when he heard God telling him to eat things that were against the law of Israel. He didn't understand what God was trying to tell him.

Acts 10:15-16

But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean." (16) The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

God gave this message to Peter three times and it was very confusing to him. So, he sat and thought about this message; he was trying to figure out what God was saying to him.

Acts 10:17-18

Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, (18) they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

While Peter was thinking about the vision God gave him, Cornelius' men arrived at the gate where Peter was staying.

Acts 10:19

Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you."

The Holy Spirit told Peter that not to be afraid to go with them.

Acts 10:20-21

Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them." (21) So Peter went down and said, "I'm the man you are looking for. Why have you come?"

Peter obeyed God and went to greet the three men.

Acts 10:22

They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message."

Peter may not have fully understood what God was telling him to do but he obeyed.

There is a lesson here for us, too. You may not understand why God is asking you to do something, but you must trust that He has a reason and a purpose. For example, God may ask you to be a friend to someone at school or in your neighborhood that no one else likes. But God wants you to shine your life before them so that they will get to know Him.

Let me summarize what happened when Peter obeyed God.

Peter went to Cornelius' home. By entering the home of a Gentile, Peter was going against the laws of Israel, but not against God's word.

Acts 10:28

Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean."

Cornelius was waiting for them to come which showed that he had faith in God. When Peter got there, Cornelius told Peter about the vision the Lord had given him.

Then Peter told Cornelius and his household that God wants all people to come into His family of believers. Peter told them that Jesus had come into the world to save all sinners, not just the Jews.

Acts 10:34-36 [Our verse for today!]

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. (35) In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. (36) This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

Peter knew that long ago God had chosen the Jews to be His special people. But the Jews didn't understand. The Jews thought that because they were God's chosen people, that God only loved the Jews. But God had chosen them to show all the other people on earth that the God of heaven was the only true God.

Peter now understood what his vision meant. God wanted to show him that the good news of the gospel was for everyone, not just the Jews.

While Peter was still speaking, salvation came to each of these Gentiles as they believed in their hearts that Jesus was truly the Savior of the whole world.

Acts 10:44

Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message.

God promised Abraham, and his descendants, that the blessing that came through him would extend to all nations (Gen 12:1-4).

Acts 10:47-48

"Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" (48) So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days."

Everyone who believed wanted to be baptized.

We have learned a couple of important lessons today. First, we have learned that even good people, who are respectful towards God, still need to come to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and put all their trust in who Jesus is and what He has done for them. When we started this lesson, Cornelius was a good man, but he had not yet come to faith in what Jesus did for him on the cross.

Second, we learned that God has no favorites. The Jews thought because they were God's chosen people, that they were the only ones God wanted to save. They didn't understand what they were chosen for. God wanted them to go into the world and not just tell people about God's ways, but to show them how to live a set-apart life.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to live our lives in a way that pleases you with every thought, word and action. Please help us to live in such a way that people want to get to know You better because of the fruit of the Spirit they see in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Beach Ball

Before you play the game, categorize the questions into color groups.

Throw a beachball to a student. The student is to answer a question that corresponds to the color where the tip of his right thumb touches the ball. Then have that student throw the ball to another student.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Name 2 things that you learned about Cornelius from verses 1 and 2. (He feared God, gave to the poor, prayed regularly, lived in Caesarea, was a Roman army officer, and was not a Jew.)
2. True or False: Cornelius was saved because he lived a righteous life, prayed, and gave to the poor? (False)
3. How did God speak to Cornelius? (By sending an angel to speak to him while he was praying.)
4. What did the angel of God tell Cornelius to do? (Send some men to get Peter.)
5. Tell me about Peter's vision from God. (A large sheet came down with all sorts of animals in it and the Lord told him to kill and eat.)
6. Why didn't Peter want to obey the Lord? (He had never eaten anything that the Jewish laws had forbidden.)
7. When Cornelius' men arrived at Peter's, what did the Holy Spirit tell Peter? (Don't be afraid to go with these men.)
8. What did Peter tell Cornelius about Jesus? (He shared the message of the gospel.)
9. What important lesson did Peter learn? (God has no favorites; He loves all people and wants everyone to come into His family.)
10. Cornelius was a good man. Why do you think it was hard for Peter to enter Cornelius' home? (It was against the law for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home or to associate with a Gentile.)
11. Why was Peter willing to go into Cornelius' home if it was against the law? (God had shown him that he should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.)
12. What did all these Gentiles do when they believed in Jesus? (They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.)

Early Church Grows and Changes

(Acts 11)

Introduction

Ask: Do you know what one of the hardest things for people to do? [Write the word “C H A N G E” on the board.]

Some people really enjoy changes. But most of us do not like change in our lives. When we are used to things being a certain way, we find change uncomfortable. When we have sudden change, we may even feel insecure or fearful.

Ask: What are some things that are hard to change? (Going from being right-handed to left-handed, changing languages or schools.)

Ask: What are some changes that you have faced in your life? (Moving, divorce, sickness, death, different school, etc.) [Teacher, share an experience from your own life, if possible.]

These kinds of changes can sometimes disrupt our lives. The only way we can handle the twists and turns of change that happen in our lives is to walk closely with Jesus every day. As believers we can always trust God when we face whatever changes come our way. He uses change for our good.

Ask: Have you ever had to change your attitude or opinion about something?

In today’s lesson we will learn how one group of people had to change their opinion about another group of people.

Opening Prayer

Father, in Your word You say, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* Your word will never change. We can always trust You. We know that when change happens in our lives, You can be trusted because You always bring good from it. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

Lesson

We have been taking a journey through the book of Acts and learning about the beginnings of the Christian church.

One of the last things Jesus told His followers before He ascended back into heaven, was to go into all the world and “*make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matt 28:19) It was God’s plan for all people to come into the family of God.

Up until this point the only people who were part of the family of God were Jewish believers.

Even though His disciples had heard Jesus tell them to go into all the world to make disciples, these Jewish believers still did not understand that God actually wanted non-Jewish people to be part of His family. They had been brought up following the Jewish laws and traditions and had always believed that Gentiles; that is, non-Jewish people were bad. Peter and the other Apostles were taught never to go into a Gentile’s home or to eat with Gentiles.

In our last lesson, we learned that God had broken the barrier between Jews and Gentiles when Cornelius and his household became believers in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. But including Gentiles in the church brought change to what the Jewish believers had always thought to be God’s plan. They had to have an attitude adjustment.

Now the church included Cornelius and his household, who were Gentiles. This was a big change, a change that was going to make the Jewish believers very uncomfortable.

Acts 11:1-3

Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. (2) But when Peter arrived

*back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers **criticized** him. (3) “You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said.*

When Peter got back to Jerusalem and told the other Jewish believers about what had happened in Caesarea, they criticized Peter because he had gone into the home of a Gentile and ate with him. These Jewish believers still thought that Gentiles were unclean and that God only loved the Jewish people.

Peter explained that Cornelius and his whole household had received the power of the Holy Spirit just like they had. Let’s read what Peter told them in verse 17:

Acts 11:17

And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?”

The Jewish believers wanted to please God. Now, they were faced with a major change in their way of thinking. They could either believe Peter was right and trust this really was God’s plan, or they could reject what Peter was telling them and stick with believing what they had always thought—that Gentiles were unworthy of God’s love.

Acts 11:18

When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, “We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”

When the people heard Peter explain God’s plan to save the Gentiles, they accepted what Peter said and gave God praise because He was allowing the Gentiles to be saved and to become part of the family of God.

The Church in Antioch

The next thing we learn in Acts 11 is that many other Gentiles were putting their trust in Jesus. When the persecution began in Jerusalem, many believers moved away from Jerusalem. When these believers

met their new neighbors, they told them about Jesus and many Gentiles in Antioch became believers.

Acts 11:21

The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

God was at work and when the news that many Gentiles were becoming believers in Antioch reached the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to visit the new believers.

Acts 11:22-24

When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (23) When he arrived and saw this evidence of God’s blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. (24) Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.

We were first introduced to Barnabas in chapter 4 and in chapter 9. Barnabas was well known for encouraging new believers to remain faithful to the Lord with all their hearts.

Because so many people were coming into the church, Barnabas decided to go to Tarsus to get Saul, a man that God had greatly changed.

Ask: What do you remember about Saul? [Let the students respond.]

Saul had been a persecutor of Christians, but God changed his heart. He was now a powerful preacher of “the way.”

Acts 11:25-26

Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. (26) When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

Barnabas and Saul stayed in Antioch for a year, teaching many new believers how to live their lives in a way that pleases God.

Ask: What were the believers called in Antioch? (Christians!)

This was meant to be an insulting term at first. But in time, the believers accepted it as an honor.

Agabus Predicts a Famine

The next thing we learn in Acts 11 is that a famine was about to come upon the entire Roman world.

Ask: What is a famine? [Let the students respond.]

Acts 11:27-28

During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. (28) One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.)

Ask: What is a prophet? (Someone who tells the future.)

A prophet named Agabus came from Jerusalem to Antioch. The Holy Spirit spoke through him and told the believers that a severe famine was going to spread over the entire Roman world.

Acts 11:29-30

So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. (30) This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

The believers in Antioch decided to put together a large care package for the believers in Jerusalem.

It had been a hard change for the Jewish believers to accept the Gentile believers into the family of God. But the generosity of the Gentile believers in Antioch proved to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that they were all brothers and sisters in the same family.

Change can be tough. But when you place your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit living in your heart will enable you to trust the Lord has a good plan for any changes that He allows to come into your life.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to handle change in our lives with grace, knowing that you allow us to go through trials in our lives to bring about change in our way of thinking. You always have the best in mind for us. Forgive us when we kick against the changes you bring about. Help us to embrace them as part of your will for our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Spin the Wheel

Make a spinner with numbers. Upon a correctly answered question, the student spins the wheel to determine points for his/her team.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who criticized Peter? (The Jewish believers)
2. How did Peter respond when he was criticized? (He explained in detail what God had done.)
3. How did the Jewish believers respond to Peter? (They had no further objections and praised God.)
4. What happened as the Good News was shared in Antioch? (Many Gentiles were saved.)
5. Who visited the believers in Antioch? (Barnabas)

6. Describe Barnabas. (Good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and faith)
7. Where did Barnabas go to get Saul? (Tarsus)
8. How long did Barnabas and Saul teach in Antioch (1 full year)
9. What were the disciples called in Antioch? (Christians)
10. How did the believers respond to Agabus' message of a coming famine? (Provided help for believers living in Judea)
11. How have you learned to respond to changes that happen in your life? (Trust that God will make all things work together for good.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

God Delivers Peter from Prison

(Acts 12:1-19)

Introduction

As we have been studying the Book of Acts, we have seen God's power in many ways. Can you name some ways we have seen God's power in the lessons we have had in Acts? (Jesus ascended into Heaven, Peter healed a lame man, God transformed Saul's life, Peter healed Aeneas and raised Tabitha from the dead.)

Today we're going to learn about the power of prayer and we will find out about a time God answered prayers in a miraculous way when things looked completely hopeless to the disciples.

Opening Prayer

Father, teach us this morning the importance and the power of prayer. Make us prayer warriors. Help us to have total confidence in Your ability to help us even in hard times. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16 NIV)

Lesson

We have been learning about life for the first Christians. We learned that as more and more people were coming to faith in Jesus, some of the Jews didn't like that and they were making life difficult for the believers

At that time, the Romans were ruling Israel. Herod Agrippa was the king in Jerusalem. Herod wanted to please the Jewish religious leaders and he knew the Jews hated Jesus' followers. So, Herod put the Apostle, James, into prison and later had him killed with a sword. When he saw this pleased the Jews, Herod also put Peter in prison and was no doubt planning to kill him, after the Passover feast.

Acts 12:1-4

About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. (2) He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. (3) When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.) (4) Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover.

Under Roman law, guards who allowed a prisoner to escape received the same punishment the prisoner was to receive. So, you know, Peter was guarded very securely by these 16 soldiers.

Peter was being treated unfairly by the king who was against Christians. Today in many places around the world Christians still suffer and are mistreated because they love the Lord and want to serve Him.

Ask: Have you ever been persecuted because you are a Christian? Has anyone been rude to you or teased you because you made a stand for Jesus? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

Your teachers or classmates may give you a hard time, but Jesus says you should expect it and continue to trust Him.

God allows hard times to come into our lives. He doesn't protect us from difficult times because He knows that our faith grows when we go through trials. James 1:2-4 tells us that "*the testing of your faith produces patience.*" Patience is the ability to go through hard times calmly trusting God. When you are being persecuted, God is working to make your faith stronger so that others will see the Lord Jesus in your life. As a result, you will grow in the Lord and His name will be glorified. Knowing this, you should have confidence in God even in hard times. God allowed Peter to be put in prison unjustly for a special purpose.

Acts 12:5

But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

Everyone knew that Herod undoubtedly planned to execute Peter, yet the believers were praying for Peter's safety.

Ask: The situation was hopeless for Peter, why were the believers praying?

The believers offered constant fervent prayer for Peter even though the possibility of rescuing him from Herod seemed hopeless because they knew prayer changes things! This is an example of how we should never give up in our prayer for others.

Let's see what Peter was doing the night before his trial.

Acts 12:6

The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate.

Ask: Why do you think Peter was able to calmly sleep when he knew Herod was planning to kill him the next day? (Acts 12:6)

Peter knew that God is in control of every situation. That is why he could peacefully sleep in prison during this hard time.

Peter didn't know that something exciting was about to happen!

Acts 12:7-10

Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. (8) Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered. (9) So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. (10) They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.

Some pretty amazing stuff was happening here! An angel appeared and struck Peter on the side to wake him up. His chains fell off, they walked right by two sets of guards, then the iron gate opened all by itself! Peter didn't know if this was real or if he was dreaming this!

Acts 12:11

Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!"

Peter immediately realized that God had delivered him! God had done a miracle! No doubt Peter was praising and thanking God. Peter's faith in God would certainly be much stronger now because he had experienced God's help in a difficult situation. If Jesus is your Savior, you should have confidence in God even in hard times.

The Bible says in Psalm 56:3, "*Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.*" When you are treated unfairly or even persecuted, you can know God has allowed it for your good. You must trust in God alone and know that He is working in all things — good and bad, easy and hard, happy and sad. He's the One who will make things work out for good. God is sovereign: He is in control and can do anything. He certainly proved that to Peter by freeing him from prison in such a miraculous way.

Acts 12:12-15

When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. (13) He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. (14) When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" (15) "You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel."

Ask: Why didn't the disciples believe Rhoda?

Even though the disciples had been praying earnestly for Peter, they didn't believe Rhoda when she told them that Peter was at the door! They were not expecting God to answer their prayer!

There's a lesson here for us: we should always expect God to hear and answer our prayers.

Acts 12:16

Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.

They couldn't believe their eyes!

Acts 12:17

He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James [brother of Jesus] and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

Ask: When the believers heard how God had delivered Peter from prison, what do you think they did?

They had seen the power of prayer, and understood that God is all-powerful. They probably gave thanks to God! Seeing God work in this hard situation in such a great way, strengthened their faith, gave them joy, and renewed their courage. They continued to go through more persecution, but now their trust in God was stronger.

Ask: Why didn't Peter stay with his friends? Why did he depart and go to another place?

Peter knew that when Herod discovered he wasn't in prison, he'd come looking for him. So, it wasn't safe to be there with his friends.

Acts 12:18-19

At dawn there was a great commotion among the soldiers about what had happened to Peter. (19) Herod Agrippa ordered a thorough search for him. When he couldn't be found, Herod interrogated the guards and sentenced them to death. Afterward Herod left Judea to stay in Caesarea for a while.

Notice that the guards were put to death because the prisoner they were guarding escaped.

If Jesus is your Savior you should trust in God, too. If you're going through a trial, instead of getting angry, worried, or upset, you can

trust Him for quietness and peace on the inside. Remember, He is with you every minute and will cause everything to turn out for good. Talk to God, ask Him to give you peace about the situation and trust that He will make everything work out for the best.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for giving us the gift of prayer. We're glad You hear every prayer. Please help us to remember to pray. Make us prayer warriors. Help us to have total confidence in Your ability to help us even in hard times. Thank You, God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES**GAME CENTER****Checkers**

Place at least eight red and eight black checkers or plastic game pieces in a small paper bag. Divide the children in two teams and have them take turns answering questions. As a child answers a question correctly, he may reach into the bag and pull out a checker for his team. If he chooses a red checker, he gets to keep the checker and draw again. If he draws a black checker he keeps it but his turn is finished. At the end of the game, the team with the most checkers (red and black) wins.

Use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who did Herod have put to death by a sword? (Vs 2. The Apostle James, the brother of John.)
2. Why did Herod arrest Peter? (Vs 3. Because he saw that the Jews were pleased when James was put to death.)

3. How many soldiers guarded Peter in jail? (Vs 4. Four squads or 16 soldiers.)
4. Even though the possibility of rescuing Peter from Herod seemed hopeless, what did the believers do? (Vs 5. They earnestly prayed. Prayer changes things, so you should pray often and with confidence. You can have confidence in God even in hard times.)
5. Why do you think Peter was able to sleep when he knew Herod was planning to kill him the next day? (Vs 6. Peter knew God is in control of every situation. Look up John 21:18. Peter had Jesus' promise that he would live to an old age. Peter knew that God always keeps His promises. You can have confidence in God even in hard times, too.)
6. How did the angel get Peter to wake up? (Vs 7. He struck him on the side!)
7. How did Peter get the prison gate open? (Vs 10. It opened of its own accord.)
8. Why didn't Rhoda open the gate for Peter? (Vs 14. She was so overjoyed that she ran back inside to tell everyone that Peter was at the door.)
9. Why did the believers think Rhoda was out of her mind? (Vs 15. They didn't believe it was really Peter! They weren't expecting God to answer! Yet, the prayers of the group of believers were answered, even as they prayed! But when the answer arrived at the door, they didn't believe it. We should be people of faith who believe that God answers our prayers. When you pray, believe you will get an answer. And when the answer comes, don't be surprised; be thankful. Remember our Memory verse, James 5:16.)
10. In verse 17, Peter tells the believers to "*Go tell these things...to the brethren.*" Can you imagine what the other believers did when they heard how God had delivered Peter from prison? (They no doubt realized the power of prayer, understood that God is all-powerful, and gave thanks to God. Seeing God work in this hard situation in such a great way strengthened their faith, gave them joy and renewed their courage. So you should always share with others the great things that God does for you! It will encourage people to put their trust in God, even in hard times.)
11. Why didn't Peter stay with his friends? Why did he depart and go to another place? (Vs 17. It wasn't safe there.)
12. Why did God allow James to be killed with the sword and yet miraculously save Peter? (Life is full of difficult questions like this. Why is one child physically disabled and another child athletically gifted? These are questions we cannot possibly answer in this life because we do not see all that God sees. He has chosen to allow evil in this world for a time. But we can trust God's leading because he has promised to destroy all evil eventually. In the meantime, we know that God will help us use our suffering to strengthen us and glorify Him. You can have confidence in God even in hard times.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Holy Spirit Sends Barnabas and Saul Out

(Acts 12:25—13:12)

Introduction

We have been studying the Book of Acts and we have been learning more and more about the Holy Spirit.

God is three Persons in One: God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. That is hard to understand because we humans are one person, while God is three persons. When Jesus, the Son, returned to heaven, the Father sent the Holy Spirit to come upon the believers. This was on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

As we have studied Acts, we have seen how the Holy Spirit gave believers the power to be brave and teach the Good News about Jesus even in difficult situations.

The same Holy Spirit that we read about in Acts is still working in the world that we live in. When a person hears the message that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, the Holy Spirit shows them that they need to have their sins forgiven in order to have a right relationship with God. The moment you ask Jesus to forgive your sins, the Holy Spirit comes into your life.

It is the Holy Spirit that gives you the power to obey God; that is, to say *No* to sin and *Yes* to God's way. It is the Holy Spirit that helps you to be brave in difficult situations; to stand up and do the right thing or say the right thing even when everyone else is doing the wrong thing.

When you are naughty, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts you that you have sinned and need to confess your sin to God. After your sin is forgiven, it is the Holy Spirit that fills your heart with peace and joy because you know that your relationship with God has been made right again.

Our lesson today continues to teach us how the Holy Spirit is involved in the lives of Jesus followers.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You sent the Holy Spirit. Thank You that He is alive and active in our lives. Even though You are invisible, show us Your power today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
(Ephesians 2:10)

Lesson

In this lesson we pick up the story of Barnabas and Saul. If you remember, two weeks ago, we learned that Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch for over a year, teaching people about Jesus. Many people came to faith. [Teacher, show Antioch on a Bible map.]

While they were in Antioch, a prophet named Agabus came from Jerusalem and told the believers that the Holy Spirit told him that a severe famine was going to spread over the entire Roman world.

Acts 11:29-30

So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. (30) This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

Now turn to the end of chapter 12.

Acts 12:25

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them.

John Mark was Barnabas' nephew and he is also the writer of the Gospel of Mark.

Now let's turn to chapter 13.

Acts 13:2-3

*One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” (3) So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.*

Ask: What is *fasting*?

Fasting is removing something from your life (food, TV, video games, etc.) for a time so you can focus more clearly on God and what He wants you to do. God wants to speak to you, but you have to take the time to listen for His voice.

While Barnabas, Saul, John Mark, and the other believers were praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

Sometimes when we can't see something, we wonder if it is real. We cannot see the Holy Spirit and yet He is very real. He is working in the lives of believers so others can see the power of God and come to know Jesus as Savior.

Our verse for today tells us that God has prepared work for each of us to do. You must tune your ear to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit while you are reading the Bible and praying so you know what to do. He wants to lead you and guide you in the ways He has planned for you.

God had a work for Barnabas and Saul to do so while they were praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

Ask: What did the Holy Spirit say? (“Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.”)

Acts 13:4

So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus.

The Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul to the island of Cyprus to tell people about Jesus. [Show on map.]

Acts 13:5

*There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish **synagogues** and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.*

In every town they visited, Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark went into the Jewish synagogues to tell the Jews that Jesus was their long-awaited for Messiah. A *synagogue* is a Jewish place of worship. We call our place of worship a *church*.

God's enemy, Satan, hates God and does everything he can to keep people from hearing the message of the cross. Let's read how Satan tried to discourage people from believing in God.

Acts 13:6-8 [Teacher, read....]

*Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a **Jewish sorcerer**, a **false prophet** named Bar-Jesus. (7) He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.*

Bar-Jesus was bad news! He was a Jew, but he was not obedient to God's laws because we read here that he was a **sorcerer**. When God gave His laws to Moses, He told the Jewish people not to practice sorcery (magic/witchcraft.) This is an evil practice that God warned His people not to have anything to do with. People who practice magic are empowered, not by the Holy Spirit, but by evil spirits.

This passage also tells us that Bar-Jesus was a **false prophet**. God's prophets always speak the truth and do not lie. Bar-Jesus was being controlled by Satan and he was telling the governor not to pay any attention to Barnabas and Saul. He was trying to keep the governor from hearing the truth that Barnabas and Saul were sharing with him.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul had wisdom to recognize what Bar-Jesus was up to. Then the Holy Spirit gave Saul the power to speak.

Acts 13:9-10

Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. (10) Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord?"

First, notice that **Saul** is also known as **Paul**. Up to this point Saul had been using the Jewish form of his name. Now that he was sharing the Good News with Gentiles, he began to use his Roman name of *Paul*. (Just like the name *John* in English is *Juan* in Spanish.)

Paul knew the power Satan had over his own life before he believed in Jesus. Remember, he had done everything he could to stop people from hearing the message about Jesus. Once he became a believer in Jesus, Paul was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:11

Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

Once the governor heard Paul's message about Jesus and saw God's power to blind Bar-Jesus, he became a believer in Jesus.

Acts 13:12

When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

In this lesson we have learned that although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, He is very much alive. He speaks to people to guide and direct our lives, but we must learn to listen for His voice.

He wants to speak to you today, too. When God speaks to you, He might call you to do something special for Him, just like He called Barnabas and Paul to leave Antioch and go to the island of Cyprus to preach the Good News to the people there. Or, He might ask you to tell someone about Jesus or to be a friend to someone that is lonely.

Ask: How should you tune your ear to hear Him?

As you read God's word, the Bible, you will become more and more familiar with His voice. He will speak into your heart and you will know that it is Him calling you.

God calls every believer to do a work He has prepared for them to do and the Holy Spirit empowers and enables them to do that work.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You have a special assignment for me to do. I want to be tuned into Your voice so that I can know what You want me to do. Perhaps there is someone You want me to share the Good News with. Please direct my thoughts so that I don't miss hearing Your instructions. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES**GAME CENTER****Help! I'm stuck!**

Divide the children into two teams and have each choose someone to be "stuck" to the wall (with his head, hands, and feet against it). If a child answers a question correctly, he can help the stuck person on his team get unstuck by pulling one part of his body away from the wall (for example, his hand). If a question is answered incorrectly, the other team may guess the answer and unstick their teammate. The first team to unstick their teammate's head, both hands, and both feet is the winning team.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? (God; Third person of the Trinity; Lives in the hearts of the believers.)

2. What were the Christians doing in Antioch when the Holy Spirit spoke? (Worshiping the Lord and fasting.)
3. What is fasting? (*Fasting* is removing something from your life (food, TV, video games, etc.) for a time so you can focus more clearly on God and what He wants you to do.)
4. Where did Barnabas and Saul go first when they left Antioch? (They sailed to Cyprus.)
5. In each town they visited, where did they go to preach God's Word and share the Good News? (The Synagogue.)
6. Why did Saul start using the name *Paul*? (Because it was his Roman name and he was sharing the Good News with non-Jewish people.)
7. Why did the governor send for Barnabas and Saul? (He wanted to hear God's Word taught.)
8. Who tried to stop the governor from believing in Jesus and why? (Bar-Jesus, empowered by Satan, the enemy of God.)
9. What did Paul do to Bar-Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit? (He caused him to be blind.)
10. Why did the governor believe Paul's message? (When he saw the miracle performed by Paul who caused Bar Jesus to be blind, he became a believer.)
11. God had a plan for Barnabas and Saul and He has a plan for you, too. How can you discover God's plan for your life? (Pray and listen for His voice as you read His word. Look for opportunities to be a blessing to God.)
12. What would keep a person from saying "Yes" to the plans God has for them? (They are too busy doing other things; or, too lazy to follow God's leading; or, not interested; or the timing isn't right; or they are selfish.)

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Two Reactions to the Good News

(Acts 13:13—14:7)

Introduction

God had promised to send the Messiah to the people of Israel. The Jewish people prayed for the day when He would come. However, when Jesus got here some people didn't recognize who He was. While many people believed He was the Messiah, some people were not so easily convinced.

Today we're going to find out that the Holy Spirit gave Paul and Barnabas the boldness to preach the message of salvation whether people received their message or not.

Opening Prayer

Lord, it must have been awfully hard for Paul and Barnabas to continue to tell people about Your offer of salvation when so many rejected it. Yet they faced the rejection and persecution and continued to obediently share the gospel with everyone they could. Help us to learn to trust the Holy Spirit like they did. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. (Ephesians 6:19 NLT)

Lesson

Last week we learned that Paul and Barnabas shared the Good News with the governor of **Paphos** [pronounced "Pay-Foss"] on the island of **Cyprus**. [Show on map.] If you remember, Bar-Jesus, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet who was empowered by the evil one, tried to keep the people from believing in Jesus.

Whenever the Good News is being shared, Satan tries hard to keep people from believing in Jesus. Fortunately, the governor heard the message of salvation and believed that Jesus was the Messiah the Savior of the world.

When we share the Good News, some will believe and some will not. It can be discouraging when people refuse to believe. Even so, Jesus commanded us to go into all the world and make disciples.

Mark 16:15-16

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. (16) Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned."

Whether people believe us or not, we are to keep on spreading the word about the great gift that Jesus has given us. He died on the cross in our place so that we can have eternal life with Him in heaven.

Paul and Barnabas continued to travel. They left **Paphos** on the island of Cyprus and went to a town called **Antioch** in the region of Pisidia. [Show on map.] This is not the same Antioch that Paul was in before. It is a different town with the same name.

When they arrived, as usual they went to the Jewish synagogue (the place Jews meet every week to worship God). There Paul was invited to share a message of encouragement.

Acts 13:15-16

After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it." (16) So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. "Men of Israel," he said, "and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me."

Paul reminds the people that ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God had promised to send the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, and then Paul explained that God kept this promise by sending Jesus.

Paul told the people that God promised that the Messiah would have to suffer and die, but then He would rise from the dead.

Acts 13:30-32

But God raised him from the dead! (31) And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel. (32) “And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors,

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to preach the Good News to the people. He goes on in verse 38...

Acts 13:38-39

“Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. (39) Everyone who believes in him is made right in God’s sight—something the law of Moses could never do.

Paul’s message had a great impact on the lives of many people listening that day.

Acts 13:42-44

As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week. (43) Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God. (44) The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord.

Many people received Paul’s message of salvation and believed in Jesus. Unfortunately, there were some people who refused to believe.

Acts 13:45

But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

Paul and Barnabas explained that they shared the message of the Good News with them first because they are Jews. You see, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah since the beginning of time. And Jesus came as the fulfillment of that promise; He was the fulfillment of their scriptures. But, since these Jews rejected the message of Jesus,

Paul and Barnabas told them that they were now going to take the Good News to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:46-47

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. (47) For the Lord gave us this command when he said, ‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.’”

The same message that angered the unbelieving Jews caused a completely different reaction in the Gentiles.

Acts 13:48-49

When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. (49) So the Lord’s message spread throughout that region.

God’s word spread throughout the area and this caused the unbelieving Jews to stir up more trouble for Paul and Barnabas and forced them to leave Antioch of Pisidia. Notice who the Jewish religious leaders stirred up against Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 13:50

*Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and **ran them out of town**.*

The Jews stirred up those who had influence over the people—people who had money and power.

As Paul and Barnabas left, they did something that seems odd to us.

Acts 13:51

So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium.

To better understand why they did this, turn to Mark 6:11. This is Jesus speaking...

Mark 6:11

But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate."

Ask: Have you ever heard anyone say, "I wash my hands of this"?

When you have done all you can to convince a person that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, but they refuse to believe, then you have to leave it up to the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those you are trying to convince.

Paul and Barnabas did not let the response of the unbelieving Jews discourage them from continuing their missionary journey. As they traveled, they were filled with Joy.

Acts 13:52

And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

They left Antioch of Pisidia and traveled next to **Iconium**. [Show on map.]

Acts 14:1

The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.

The Holy Spirit gave Paul and Barnabas the power to speak boldly.

Acts 14:2

Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.

The Jews who refused to believe, criticized the message of Paul and Barnabas said bad things about them.

Even though people were stirring up trouble, the Holy Spirit empowered Paul and Barnabas to keep doing the work that God told them to do. They stayed in Iconium a long time, teaching God's word boldly. And, God's power could be seen through Paul and Barnabas when He gave them the ability to do miracles.

Acts 14:3

But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.

The Lord proved their message was true by giving Paul and Barnabas the power to do miracles, which we will see in our next lesson

The people in Iconium were divided into two groups of people. Some of the people believed that Paul and Barnabas were teaching God's truth to them. Others did not believe.

Acts 14:4

But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

The group of people who did not believe made plans to kill Paul and Barnabas. A whole mob decided to attack Paul and Barnabas and stone them to death. When they learned of this plan they quickly left

Acts 14:5-7

Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. (6) When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. (7) And there they preached the Good News.

Paul and Barnabas didn't leave Iconium because they were afraid. They understood that the Holy Spirit was leading and guiding them on to the next place He wanted them to share the Good News. They trusted God to both protect them and to empower them to preach, knowing that their lives could be in danger wherever they went.

Next week we will pick up the story right here and learn more about the miracles that the Holy Spirit enabled Paul and Barnabas to do that proved their message about Jesus was true.

Sometimes when we share the Good News with others, there will be people who reject the message and may even be unkind to us. But, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit living in you and He will help you to continue to share the message of salvation with joy and boldness. He will give you the right words to say to everyone that you talk to about Jesus.

People have different reactions to Jesus. They either accept Him as God and welcome Him into their lives; or they reject Him and refuse to believe the truth.

What about you? Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, strengthen our faith in You so that we might be willing to stand up for You even when others don't believe what we're telling them. Give us compassion in our hearts to reach out to others and to keep on loving them, just like You did, no matter if they believe in You or not. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Battle of Knowledge —

Materials: Masking tape, bean bag,

Procedure:

1. Cut out 8 red circles and eight black circles.
2. Write 16 Review questions.

3. Create a sixteen-sectioned grid on the floor with the masking tape, four sections wide and four sections deep.

●	●	○	○
●	○	○	○
●	●	○	○
●	●	●	○

4. Divide the class into two teams – the Reds and the Blacks

To win the game, your team must get four circles in a row. Taking turns each team throws the bean bag into an unoccupied square. If the team answers a Review Question correctly, they get to put one of their circles in that square. If the team answers incorrectly, the other team gets a chance to answer the same question. If the other team answers correctly, they get to put one of their circles in the square. Once a circle is in a square it cannot be removed.

Teams can work together to answer the question, but each team member must take a turn throwing the bean bag.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. When was the first time God promised to send the Messiah? (Genesis 3)
2. Show me the two towns called Antioch on the map. (Vs 14.)
3. Where did Paul and Barnabas go on the Sabbath in every town they visited? (Vs 14. The Synagogue.)
4. What does it mean that they read from the books of Moses and the prophets? (Vs 15. *Moses* = first 5 books of the OT; *prophets* is everything else in the OT.)

5. What is the Good News? (Vs 32. Jesus died and rose again so that we can have forgiveness of our sins.)
6. What was something the law of Moses could not do? (Vs 39. The law could not assure people of forgiveness of their sins.)
7. Whenever the Good News is being shared, who tries hard to keep people from believing in Jesus? (Vs 44. Satan.)
8. How did some of the Jews react when they saw the crowd gathered to hear Paul? (Vs 45. They were filled with jealousy and spoke abusive words to Paul and Barnabas.)
9. Why were the Jewish religious leaders jealous of Paul and Barnabas? (Vs 45. They were losing control of the people because they were starting to trust in Jesus as the Messiah.)
10. Why did Paul and Barnabas share the Good News with the Jews first? (Vs 46. They were God's chosen people who had been waiting for the promised Messiah since the beginning of time. Jesus came as the fulfillment of that promise; He was the fulfillment of their scriptures.)
11. What does it mean that God made the Jews a light to the Gentiles. (Vs 47. God chose the family of Abraham to go out into the world and tell people about the things of heaven.)
12. How did the Gentiles respond when they heard the Good News? (Vs 48. They were glad and honored the Word of God.)
13. Who did the Jews stir up into a big commotion against Paul and Barnabas? (Vs 50. Women of high standing and leading men of the city.)
14. What forced Paul and Barnabas to run for their lives out of Antioch of Pisidian? (Vs 50. God's word spread throughout the area and this caused the unbelieving Jews to stir up more trouble for Paul and Barnabas and forced them to leave Antioch of Pisidia.)
15. Why did Paul and Barnabas shake the dust off their feet when they left Pisidian Antioch? (Vs 51. To show that they had abandoned those people to their fate.)
16. How did the Lord prove that Paul and Barnabas' message was true? (Vs 14:3. God gave them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul and Barnabas Persevere

(Acts 14:8-28)

Introduction

We have been learning that Paul and Barnabas set out on a missionary journey and the word of the Lord continued to spread. Not everyone received the message of Salvation that they shared, however. As we learned last week, many of the Jews rejected the gospel and attempted to persecute Paul and Barnabas. They endured many hard situations as they tried to spread the word about Jesus.

It's not always easy to tell people about what Jesus came to do for us. But today we will learn that the Holy Spirit empowers all believers to share the Gospel, despite difficulties.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You give us the strength to keep on going even when we face hard situations. Help us to know that the Holy Spirit is with us and can enable us to do all that You have called us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2-3 ESV)

Lesson

God had a special job for Paul and Barnabas. While they were fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit told them to go out from Antioch in Syria to spread the Good News to other parts of the world.

[Teacher trace Paul's first missionary journey on the map as you review.] First, the Holy Spirit sent them to the island of **Cyprus**. They visited the town of **Salamis**, then they went across the entire island to the town of **Paphos** [pronounced "Pay-Foss"]. That's where they met

Bar-Jesus, the Jewish sorcerer and false prophet empowered by Satan, who tried to prevent the governor from believing Paul's message about Jesus.

Next, they went to **Antioch of Pisidia**. Everywhere Paul went he shared the Good News with power and boldness. Many people received Paul's message of salvation and believed in Jesus. Unfortunately, there were some people who refused to believe and some of those unbelieving Jews stirred up trouble for Paul and Barnabas!

Last week we left off in Acts 14, verse 7 when Paul and Barnabas were about to go to the town of Lystra.

Acts 14:8-10

*While they were at **Lystra**, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting (9) and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, **Paul realized he had faith to be healed.** (10) So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.*

Ask: How do you think Paul knew that the man had faith to be healed? (The Holy Spirit gave Paul discernment.)

It was a miracle that this man could stand on his feet and walk. A *miracle* is something only God can do.

When God performs a miracle, it is to show us His power and point us to Him. God gave Paul the ability to perform this miracle to prove to people his message of salvation was true.

Acts 14:11-13

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" (12) They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. (13) Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

God created people to have a relationship with Him. He is the One and only true God and He alone deserves to be worshiped.

The people who lived in Lystra worshiped false gods or idols. When they saw the crippled man healed, the people thought that Barnabas must be the Greek god Zeus and since Paul was the chief speaker, they thought Paul must be their god Hermes!

So the priest of the temple brought bulls and prepared to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. When Paul and Barnabas realized what the people were doing, they tried to stop them and told them they were only men like them.

Acts 14:14

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,

Ask: Why did Paul and Barnabas tear their clothes?

In Bible Times, this was a way to show true sorrow for sin and grief for offending God.

Ask: What do you think might have happened to Paul and Barnabas if they had allowed the people to worship them as if they were gods?

God is highly offended when people give glory to other gods. The first two commandment were:

You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:3)

You shall not make for yourself a carved image (Exodus 20:4)

The punishment for breaking these laws was death!

Let's see what happened to King Herod when he received worship:

Acts 12:21-23

On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. (22) And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" (23) Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

Paul and Barnabas told the people to stop worshiping false gods and turn to the living God.

Acts 14:15-17

*"Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to **the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.** (16) In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, (17) but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, **he sends you rain and good crops** and gives you food and joyful hearts."*

Ask: Why did Paul and Barnabas stress to the people that it was the **living** God who had created everything, including the rain?

A statue, or a carved image, is not what created the world, or blesses the fields with rain. The one and only true God is alive and cares for people. He knows each one of us by name; He knows how many hairs are on our heads; He hears and answers our prayers. He is the One who provides what we need to live—the rain and good crops that provide food for us to eat. He is the only One deserving of our worship.

God did not want the people of Lystra to worship His messengers. He wanted them to turn from their sin and worship Him, the one and only true God; the *living* God.

Even when Paul shared God's words with these people, they were having a hard time not worshiping them.

Acts 14:18

But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

As Paul and Barnabas served God in Lystra, their enemies were still working to fight against them. Some people from Antioch of Pisidian and Iconium had followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. And they were still stirring up trouble with the people. The crowd believed the

lies that Paul and Barnabas' enemies were spreading and turned against Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:19

Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead.

One minute the crowds were worshipping Paul and Barnabas and the next they turned violent against them.

The enemies of Paul thought they had silenced him. They dragged what they thought was his dead body outside the city.

Acts 14:20

But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Many believers gathered around Paul's body, thinking he was dead. To their surprise, Paul stood up and walked right back into Lystra.

Ask: Wow! Would you have walked back into that town full of people that wanted to kill you?

The Holy Spirit gave Paul courage even when he was persecuted and mistreated by his enemies.

Paul and Barnabas left the next day from Lystra and went to Derbe. Many people in Derbe heard the Good News and believed in Jesus.

When it was time to leave Derbe, Paul and Barnabas knew it was time to return to the believers in Antioch in Syria where they began their missionary journey.

Acts 14:21-22

*After preaching the Good News in **Derbe** and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to **Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch** of Pisidia, (22) where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to*

continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.

At this point Paul and Barnabas were only 90 miles from Paul's home in Tarsus. You might have thought he'd had enough persecution and was ready to go home to the comforts of friends and family, but they knew God still had work for them to do.

They reversed their steps and travelled back to each city where they had shared the Good News. In each of these cities Paul and Barnabas wanted to encourage these new believers to remain faithful to God.

Ask: Why do you think the believers in these cities needed to be encouraged?

Paul and Barnabas knew they would need to keep trusting that the Holy Spirit would give them courage to stay faithful to Jesus when difficulties came. They needed to remember that God would always be with them and enable them to do what He called them to do.

After going through each city, Paul and Barnabas finally arrived back in Antioch of Syria.

Acts 14:27-28

Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. (28) And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

The believers there must have thanked God for His protection and power as they heard of the dangers that Paul and Barnabas had faced. They must have rejoiced when they heard how many people had come to faith in Jesus.

God guided and protected Paul and Barnabas throughout this missionary journey through all kinds of dangers and trials. And He empowered them to do the missionary work that He had called them to do.

The same Holy Spirit will empower and protect you, too, as you do your best to do whatever God has asked you to do.

Paul believed in the Good News, the gospel. He knew that it was the truth and that God had called him to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. Paul was **persistent and persevered**. He did not give up. In this chapter of Acts, violent Jews and a stoning did not persuade him to stop telling the gospel. He, literally, got back up again and returned to the cities that had wanted him dead so that he could minister to the disciples and encourage these new believers to be faithful to Jesus.

Paul was humiliated at times, but he continued on because he knew that eternal souls were at stake. He also understood that some people would accept the gospel and others would reject it, but it was his job to tell the gospel to everyone no matter what happened.

Do you have family or friends who need to hear the gospel? Be persistent. Don't give up. Continue to pray for their salvation and ask God to give you the words to say. He will never let you down!

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I want to have the same persistence that Paul had when sharing the gospel with people. He didn't let anything discourage him or defeat what he knew You had clearly called him to do. Help me to not give up on anyone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Around the World

Have the students sit in a circle. The first two students pair off against each other. While they stay seated, you ask a question. As soon as you've finished asking the question, they both run up to a bell.

Whoever rings it first attempts to answer the question. The winner moves to the next contestant. The goal is to move as many seats as possible before losing, at which point the losing student sits in the seat of the person who bested him. The game ideally continues until one student makes it "around the world" and gets all the way back to his own seat. Often, though, the game simply ends when time is up, and the person who traveled the farthest wins.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What miracle did God do through Paul in Lystra? (Vs 8. Healed a crippled man.)
2. How do you think Paul knew that the man had faith to be healed? (Vs 9. The Holy Spirit gave Paul discernment.)
3. What is a miracle? (A miracle is something only God can do.)
4. Why were the people worshiping Paul and Barnabas? (Vs 11. They thought they were Zeus and Hermes.)
5. Why did Paul and Barnabas tear their clothes? (Vs 14. This was a sign of mourning.)
6. Why did Paul and Barnabas stress to the people that it was the **living** God who had created everything, including the rain? (Vs 15. The one and only true God is alive and cares for people. He knows each one of us by name.)
7. Why did the people of Lystra stone Paul and drag him out of the city? (Vs 19. Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed Paul to Lystra and incited the people of Lystra to stone Paul and drag his body outside the city.)
8. Instead of going straight back to Antioch in Syria where they started their trip, what did Paul and Barnabas do as they travelled home? (Stopped at the cities where they shared the Good News and encouraged the believers.)

9. Why do you think the believers in these cities needed to be encouraged? (They needed to remember that God would always be with them and enable them to do what He called them to do.)
10. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch in Syria, what did they share with the believers there? (Vs 27. All that God had done through them.)
11. What motivated Paul to continue to share the Gospel with people even when they refused to believe and even wanted to kill him? (He knew the gospel was the truth and that people would perish without receiving the Lord.)
12. What lessons have you learned from Paul? (To remain persistent; to persevere and not give up even when he was treated harshly.)

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The Jerusalem Council

(Acts 15:1-35)

Introduction

What would you think if I told you that I have a present for you but you can't have it until you clean my whole house? You'd probably think I was kidding, wouldn't you! When you have a birthday party and people bring you gifts, do you have to pay them for your gifts? No!

If you had to do something like pay some money or perform a task, or do a trick, or dance a jig to get your birthday present, it wouldn't be a gift, would it? A true gift is free, isn't it?

In the same way, God has given each one of us a gift and it is completely free. We can't work for it and we can't buy it from Him. He freely offers it to us and when we accept His gift, He doesn't take it back.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Jesus offers us eternal life. He came and died in our place on the cross and offers us the free gift of salvation. Anyone who believes that Jesus took the punishment they deserve, receives His gift of salvation by faith and is saved from eternal punishment for their sins and will live in heaven with Jesus when their life on earth is over.

Opening Prayer

Father, Thank You for Your gift of salvation. Thank You that it is completely free. I don't have to pay for it or work for it. You are so generous with us. We want to give You all the honor and glory You deserve. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Lesson

As we have been on this journey through the book of Acts, we have seen many examples of how the Holy Spirit has empowered believers to have boldness as they shared the Good News wherever they went.

We have also seen how God's enemy, Satan, hates it when people are saved by their faith in what Jesus did for them. And, he does everything he can to discourage believers from following Jesus.

What are some examples you can remember of how Satan tried to stop the spread of the Gospel?

- Stoning of Stephen.
- Saul persecuting the church before he became a believer himself.
- Apostles imprisoned

Satan thought he could stop God's work, but he was not successful.

In our last few lessons, we heard about events that happened on Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. Can you think of any examples where Satan stirred up trouble for them?

- On the island of Cyprus, Bar-Jesus, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet who was empowered by the evil one, tried to keep the people from believing in Jesus.
- In Pisidian Antioch, unbelieving Jews stirred up trouble for Paul and Barnabas and kicked them out of their city!
- In Iconium, unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.
- In Lystra, Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city as dead.

These are all examples of enemies from outside the church (the believers of Christ) trying to stop the Good News from spreading.

Satan's plans to persecute the followers of Jesus were not working and this made him angry. So, he came up with a new plan. He decided to stir up trouble among the believers, inside the church.

At the end of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary trip, they returned to Antioch of Syria. One day a group of Christians from Jerusalem came to Antioch and began to teach the believers there that they were doing things all wrong.

Acts 15:1

Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised according to the law handed down by Moses, you cannot be saved."

These were Christian men that came from Jerusalem.

Ask: What did these men tell the believers in Antioch? (They needed to be circumcised to be saved.)

They were saying that faith in Jesus was not enough. They were saying that these Gentile believers also had to keep the Law of Moses, just like the Jews. Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with them.

Acts 15:2

Because this brought about a serious argument and debate between Paul and Barnabas and these men, they appointed Paul and Barnabas and some other men from the church to go up to Jerusalem, to see the apostles and the elders concerning this controversy.

This upset the believers in Antioch so much they decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to speak with the leaders of the church there.

It was hard for Jewish believers to accept Gentiles in the family of God. (The Gentiles were all the people who were not Jewish.)

You have to understand that at first the church was made up almost entirely of Jewish people. After all, Jesus Himself was a Jew. Jews thought the only way Gentiles could be right with God was to obey all the Jewish laws. This included *circumcision*. Circumcision is a surgical procedure done to Jewish boys at birth to mark them as a member of God's family.

[Teacher, at birth, boys have skin that covers the end of their penis, called the foreskin. Circumcision surgically removes the foreskin.]

So, these Jewish believers that came to Antioch from Jerusalem thought that the Gentile believers needed to be circumcised to be right with God. This caused a big disagreement among the believers.

Paul argued that these Jewish believers were trying to add to the message of the cross saying you have to perform a surgical procedure to be pleasing to God.

To say that believers needed to be circumcised was to say that what Jesus did on the cross was not enough; that we have to do more to be saved from our sins besides trust in Jesus. But the truth is we are saved by our faith in what Jesus did for us. [Review verse for today.]

Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with these Jewish believers from Jerusalem so they went to Jerusalem to meet with the church leaders there so they could settle this issue.

Acts 15:4-5

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. (5) But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses."

The Pharisees were like policemen; they insisted that people follow Law. So, when some of the Pharisees became Christians (like Nicodemus), it was hard for them to not insist that all believers had to follow the Law of Moses. This was a new idea for them.

Satan doesn't care how he destroys God's work. If he can get believers to argue and fight with each other, it keeps their focus off the goodness of God.

This meeting could have turned ugly. But because Paul and Barnabas and the church leaders were all filled with the Holy Spirit, they had God's wisdom and guidance.

Acts 15:6-9

So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. (7) At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. (8) God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. (9) He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith.

This meeting in Jerusalem could have turned into a fighting match where people shouted at each other. But that's not what happened. Each person at the meeting spoke with respect and honor.

After much discussion Peter stood up and began to share his personal experience of how God brought salvation to Gentiles when they believed in their hearts that Jesus was truly the Savior of the whole world. [When Peter went to Cornelius' home.]

Peter knew how hard it was to obey God's laws so he asked a very interesting question.

Acts 15:10

So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

Peter was saying, "You know it's impossible for us to keep all the commandments of God perfectly. Why are you trying to make the Gentiles keep rules that none of us can keep?"

Then Peter reminds them that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, are saved by the grace of God, not by anything we do or don't do.

Acts 15:11

We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

[Review today's verse.]

After Peter spoke, Paul and Barnabas shared their experiences on their 1st missionary journey. They had witnessed God's acceptance of Gentiles into His family in every town they visited.

Acts 15:12

The whole assembly fell silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul, who reported all the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

They all agreed that the Jewish believers should not try to make it difficult for Gentiles to come to God. So, they decided the best way to deal with this issue was to write a letter to make their decisions clear:

- The Gentile believers were to respect Jewish traditions, such as their dietary laws. (Remember, Jews were not allowed to eat anything from a pig—no bacon or pork chops.) Likewise,
- The Jewish believers were to honor the Gentiles and accept them without requiring them to keep the Law of Moses. In other words, they could go ahead and have ham sandwiches for lunch.

Paul and Barnabas along with some other believers from Jerusalem, took the letter back to Antioch and read it to the believers there.

Acts 15:31

The people read it and rejoiced over its encouraging message.

When the believers in Antioch heard the message, they were encouraged. The problem that had troubled them had been solved. They did not need to do anything else to be saved, just believe that what Jesus did on the cross paid for their sins.

Once again God's enemy, Satan, did not succeed in his plans to disrupt the church. The Holy Spirit enabled the believers to handle this disagreement with wisdom and respect.

In this lesson we learned that when Satan saw that when he caused persecution of the church from the outside didn't stop the powerful message of the cross, he turned his attention to starting arguments inside the church. Satan brought false teachers into the church and that caused the people to argue with each other. But that didn't stop the work of God, either! By the power of the Holy Spirit the people were able to solve their disagreement and the work of God continued on.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You that by the power of the Holy Spirit, You give us the wisdom we need to solve disagreements with others with love and respect. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Marbles

Preparation: Create a 24" dartboard for a floor game with three circles. Note: it works best if you use fabric like felt so the marbles don't roll so fast. Make the bullseye an 8" circle and the secondary circle 16". Label the bullseye, "10 points", the middle circle "20 points", the outer circle "50 points", and label the area off the dartboard as "100 points."



Place some marbles in the center of the dartboard on the bullseye. Use another marble as the "shooter."

Play: After correctly answering a review question, the player uses his thumb to flick the "shooter" from the edge of the dartboard into the bullseye to scatter the marbles placed there.

After each turn, add up the points based on where the marbles have rolled. Then gather the marbles and return them to the bullseye for the next person to scatter.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What is an example of how Satan tried to stop the spread of the Gospel?
2. Who came to the church in Antioch? (Christians from Jerusalem.)
3. What did the men from Jerusalem tell the believers in Antioch that they needed to do to be saved? (They needed to be circumcised.)
4. Why was it wrong for these men from Jerusalem to tell the believers in Antioch that they needed to be circumcised? (They were saying that faith in Jesus was not enough.)
5. Why was it hard for the Jewish believers to accept Gentiles into the church? (The Jews had been brought up to think they were better than the Gentiles. Also, it was hard *not* to insist that all believers had to follow the Law.)
6. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the message these men from Jerusalem bought? (They strongly disagreed with it.)
7. Where did Paul and Barnabas go and why? (They went to Jerusalem to discuss this teaching with the church leaders in Jerusalem.)
8. Tell me in your own words, what happened at the meeting in Jerusalem.

9. What did they decide to do about this problem? (They wrote a letter asking the Gentile believers to respect the traditions of the Jewish believers and telling the Jews to honor the Gentiles.)
10. When the believers in Antioch received the letter, how did they respond? (They were encouraged.)
11. What does a person need to do to be saved? (Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.)
12. Why is it wrong to expect someone to keep the Law of Moses? (That is saying that what Jesus did on the cross was not enough.)

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Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey

(Acts 15:40 — 16:15)

Introduction

We have been learning a lot about the Holy Spirit this year as we have been studying the book of Acts. Although the Holy Spirit is invisible, He is always at work in our lives leading us and guiding us and telling us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit speaking to you? He wants to speak to you while you are praying to Him or while you are reading your Bible. Perhaps He has spoken to you in a dream. You have to learn to pay close attention to Him so you don't miss anything He wants to say to you. [Teacher, tell the children about one of your experiences.]

As you spend time with Him, you will come to recognize His voice in your heart. Jesus told us, *"My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27)

When you walk with Jesus daily, you will come to recognize when the Holy Spirit is telling you to STOP and when to GO. [Teacher, hold up Stop and Go signs.] He wants to warn you when there is danger ahead, or if there is a pothole to watch out for, or a cliff you might go over if you're not careful.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You care so much for us that You don't just leave us to do life on our own. You are always with us, leading and guiding us in the way we should go. Help me to learn to recognize Your voice just as a sheep knows his shepherd's voice. Then give us the desire to do what You tell us to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:3b)

And/or

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. (Rom 8:14)

Lesson

Today we will continue the adventures of Paul. The last few weeks we have learned that Paul and Barnabas' traveled all over to start churches in many places. At the end of their trip, they returned to Antioch of Syria and there they stayed with the believers for a few years, teaching them the word of God. [Show on Bible map!]

Since it had been a few years since he had visited with all the churches he started on his trip with Barnabas, he was anxious to go back to visit the people and see how they were doing.

At the end of chapter 15, Paul asked a man by the name of **Silas**, to go with him to visit some of the places where he had started churches. We will learn more about him in the coming weeks.

Acts 15:40-41

*Paul chose **Silas**, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. (41) Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.*

How happy the believers must have been to see Paul again!

As we turn to chapter 16, Paul meets up with another man we'll be getting to know quite well in the weeks to come, **Timothy**.

Acts 16:1-2

*Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named **Timothy**. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. (2) **Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium.***

Ask: It says that *Timothy was well thought of* by the other believers. When people speak about you do they speak well of you?

Ask: Why do you think having a good reputation is important for a follower of Jesus?

Paul really thought very well of Timothy, too, and took a special interest in teaching him the ways of the Lord. Later Paul leaves Timothy to be the pastor of a church in Ephesus. After he left him there, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy that we have in our Bibles. Look in your Table of Contents and find the books of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

Paul, Silas and Timothy began to travel from town-to-town visiting the believers. As they stopped in each town, they shared the letter that the leaders in Jerusalem had written for the Gentile believers that we learned about last week.

Ask: Who remembers what the letter was about?

The letter was written to encourage both Jews and Gentiles to be respectful of each other. In Acts chapter 10 we learned that God has no favorites; He loves both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 10:34) He wants all believers to get along.

Acts 16:5

So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

From there Paul wanted to go into Asia to start churches, but the Holy Spirit stopped him from going there.

Acts 16:6

*Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because **the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia** at that time.*

The Holy Spirit forbid them from speaking the word in Asia. We don't know exactly how, but Paul knew he was not to go in the direction he was planning to travel *at that time*. God had other plans for Paul, as we will see in a moment.

One night God spoke to Paul in a vision. A vision is like a dream, only you are not asleep, you're wide awake.

Acts 16:9-10

*That night Paul had a **vision**: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (10) So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.*

Paul knew this vision was from God so he immediately obeyed what he knew the Holy Spirit was telling him to do. So, they got on a ship for Macedonia. At this point another man joins Paul's team. His name was **Luke**.

Ask: Are you familiar with the Gospel of Luke? Luke not only wrote the Gospel of Luke, but he also wrote the book of Acts, the book we are reading and studying right now. Notice the words "we" and "us" in verse 10. Luke is referring to himself.

So off they went and eventually Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke ended up in Philippi. [Show on map.]

Usually when Paul came in to a new town, on the Sabbath, he would go to the local synagogue (the Jewish place of worship) where he would tell the Jews the Good News about Jesus. But Philippi did not have a synagogue because there weren't very many Jewish people living there.

So, the Holy Spirit led Paul and his team down to the riverside to have a time of prayer. When they arrived, there were some women already there praying and worshipping God. One of the women was named **Lydia**.

Paul and his friends began to tell these women about Jesus.

Acts 16:13-14

***On the Sabbath** we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. (14) One of them was **Lydia** from Thyatira, a **merchant of expensive purple cloth**, who **worshiped God**. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.*

Ask: What can we know about Lydia from these verses?

First, we learn that she was *a merchant of expensive purple cloth*. That means she sold purple cloth [Show a piece of purple cloth]. In other words, **she was a business woman**. That's pretty remarkable because not many women had their own businesses in those days. So, we know that **she was a wise woman**.

Also, Lydia must have been **very rich** because she sold *expensive purple cloth*. Purple cloth was very hard to get because it was very expensive and time consuming to make. The dye she used would have come from tiny sea shells and she would have had to have a lot of shells to make even one small batch of purple dye. Only people in royalty or powerful rulers could afford to wear purple. So, Lydia must have been a rich business woman.

But we also know that **she loved God and worshiped Him** because Paul found her **on the Sabbath** down by the riverside praying and **worshipping God** with some other women.

Yet, she had never heard the message of Salvation.

Paul told her that Jesus had died for her sins. As Paul was teaching the women by the river about what Jesus had done for them, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to listen to Paul's words. She paid close attention to Paul as he told how Jesus died for the sins of everyone in the world and that He came back to life again. And that anyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life with Him in heaven.

As she listened to Paul, the Holy Spirit opened her heart and she immediately believed that Jesus is the one true God who has power over death and life. She knew she needed the power of the Holy Spirit and gladly gave her heart to God. Then she immediately wanted to be baptized.

Acts 16:15

She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

We learn here that Lydia **had a "household"**. In other words, many people lived with her in her home. These were probably the people who worked for her, dying the purple cloth. At any rate, we can see that Lydia was **well respected** by the people who lived with her as she convinced her whole household to accept Jesus and be baptized.

We also learn that **Lydia was hospitable**. She knew that Paul and his team needed a place to sleep and food to eat, so she invited them to stay with her at her home. She was not only rich enough to have a household, but **her home was large** enough for Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke to stay with her. And **she was generous** enough to want to take care of Paul and his team for as long as they wanted to stay with her.

So, we have learned a lot about Lydia, haven't we? [Let the children recall some of the things they learned about Lydia.] She was a smart business woman who had a desire to know God and who was respected, hospitable and generous.

More important than Lydia's story, I do not want you to miss the work of the Holy Spirit in this week's lesson.

Let's review what we learned about the leading of the Holy Spirit this week:

At the end of Acts 15, the Holy Spirit led Paul to revisit the places he had started churches.

In **Acts 16:1**, as Paul was traveling throughout Syria, strengthening the churches, he happened to meet **Timothy**.

Ask: Was this just by chance, or was this the Holy Spirit's doing?

As we will learn, Timothy will become a very important part of God's work in the early church.

In **Acts 16:6** we learned that the Holy Spirit stopped Paul going to Asia to tell people about Jesus. God had other plans for Paul. He wanted Paul to go to Macedonia at that time where he would meet Luke and a woman named Lydia.

In **Acts 16:9** we learned that the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul through a vision. There are many ways that the Lord speaks to us. But you must learn to listen for His voice. The Lord wants to show you what to do and what not to do.

One way He speaks to us is by giving us either peace about something we are planning to do or by giving us an uneasy feeling down in our heart.

Ask: Have you ever had second thoughts about doing something or saying something or going someplace? [Teacher, discuss.]

Because Paul obeyed what he knew God was telling him, he went to Philippi where he met **Luke**, who eventually would write the very book we are reading and studying right now.

In **Acts 16:13** we learned that Paul went down to the riverside and happened to meet Lydia.

Ask: Was this just by chance, or was this the Holy Spirit's doing?

Because Lydia was a very important business woman who was well respected by her employees, her whole household was saved and then she provided Paul's team with a good safe place to sleep and food to eat.

Ask: What do you think is the best way to learn to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life? [Let the children respond.]

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You that You speak to us as we read our Bibles, as we pray, and even through our dreams. It's an amazing thing to realize that You, the Creator of the whole universe, wants to talk to us individually and personally. It's because You love each us so much. Help us to recognize Your voice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Ping Pong Ball Toss

Write point numbers in the cups of two egg cartons. Place the two cartons long sides together. Divide the children into two teams. Give a child from each team 3 tosses of the ball for every right answer. The team with the highest points gets two pieces of candy while the other team gets one piece.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. As Paul, Silas and Timothy stopped in each town, what did they take with them to share with the believers? (The letter that the leaders in Jerusalem had written for the Gentile believers.)
2. What was the letter about? (The letter was written to encourage both Jews and Gentiles to be respectful of each other.)
3. When Paul wanted to go into Asia to share the gospel, what happened? (The Holy Spirit stopped him from going.)
4. How did Paul know God wanted him to go to Macedonia instead of Asia? (Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help them.)
5. God spoke to Paul in a vision. What is a vision? (It's like a dream, but you're awake.)
6. Who wrote the book of Acts? (Luke.)
7. Where did Paul usually go to share the gospel when he came into a new town? (A Jewish synagogue.)

8. Because there was no synagogue in Philippi, where did Paul go on the Sabbath? (The riverside.)
9. Who did Paul and his friends meet at the riverside? (Lydia and some women.)
10. What were the women doing? (Praying and worshiping God.)
11. What was Lydia's job? (She sold purple cloth.)
12. Who opened Lydia's heart to listen to Paul's message? (The Holy Spirit.)
13. What did Lydia and the people in her house do when they heard about Jesus? (They were baptized.)
14. What is the best way to learn to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit? (By spending time with God, reading His word and praying.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul and Silas Rejoice in Prison

(Acts 16:16-34)

Introduction

How do you react when someone is mean to you? Do you get angry? Do you want to get back at them? It's our natural reaction to lash back, isn't it. If someone calls you a bad name, you want to call him a bad name back. If someone hits you it's a natural thing to want to hit them back, isn't it.

What if you're persecuted for being a believer in Jesus?

As a Christian, you don't have to react in the flesh. You have the Holy Spirit who can help you to take control of your thoughts and give you peace and joy inside even when things on the outside aren't good.

Today our lesson is about a time that seemed hopeless to Paul and Silas, but they never stopped praising the Lord!

Opening Prayer

Father, when we're going through hard times, help us to take control of our thoughts. Help us to remember that You are all-powerful and in control of everything. Help us to learn this morning that You are ready and willing to give us peace and joy in the midst of our trials, if only we would truly learn to trust that You have our best interests in mind and that You will not allow us to go through anything that's too difficult to handle. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

Lesson

In our last lesson we learned that the Holy Spirit led Paul, Silas, and Timothy to Macedonia where they had met Luke, the man who wrote the book of Acts that we are studying.

Then, the Holy Spirit led them to Philippi where they met a woman by the name of Lydia, who invited them to stay with her.

One day as they went down by the river to meet for prayer, they met a slave girl who had an evil spirit that enabled her to tell people's future.

Acts 16:16

*One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who **had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future**. She **earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes**.*

This girl's fortune-telling ability came from Satan. Many people paid her owners a lot of money to have her tell them their future.

Acts 16:17

She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

This slave girl ran after Paul and called out that Paul and Silas were servants of God who have come to tell you how to have eternal life in heaven.

Ask: Was there anything wrong with what this girl was saying? (No!)

She was speaking the truth, but probably in a mocking tone of voice.

[Teacher, re-read verse 17 with a mocking tone of voice...]

Acts 16:18

This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to know that this girl was a messenger of Satan and he knew he had to put a stop to what the slave girl was saying. He didn't want the truth about Jesus to be confused with fortune telling. If Paul accepted the demon's words, he would have linked the truth about Jesus with demonic activity. Truth and evil do not mix so Paul had to put a stop to it.

The Holy Spirit empowered Paul to command the evil spirit to leave her in Jesus' name. The slave girl was set free from the evil spirit's

control, but this made her owners angry. Suddenly their business was ruined.

Acts 16:19-21

Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. (20) "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. (21) "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."

The girl's owners' hope of wealth was shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them to the town officials and accused them of teaching against the law. The crowd went wild and attacked Paul and Silas.

Acts 16:22-24

A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. (23) They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. (24) So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

They stripped their clothes off and whipped them until their backs were bleeding. Then they were thrown into the inner dungeon and their feet were clamped painfully to the wall. There they were in total darkness.

Can you imagine the spiders and snakes and bats and all the other things that go bump in the night? How easy it would have been for them to grumble and complain! But they didn't.

God's Word tells us to, "*Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.*" (Philippians 4:4) (By the way, this verse comes from Paul's letter to the church in Philippi that he wrote many years later.)

To rejoice in the Lord is to be joyful as you think about Him, even if you are going through hard times, like Paul and Silas were. They were locked up in prison. But they didn't complain or grumble. They were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and rejoiced in the Lord!

Paul and Silas were being treated like dangerous prisoners; but they had not done anything wrong. Who does that remind you of? (Jesus!)

Ask: If you were Paul and Silas, what do you think you would do as you were chained to the cold dark dungeon walls and your feet clamped painfully to the wall?

They could have cried and said they wanted to go home. They could have been angry and shouted about how unfair their treatment was. They could have yelled at God for allowing them to experience such harsh treatment.

Ask: When bad things happen to you how do you act?

As believers we have the power to respond like Jesus did when they crucified Him. We have the power of the Holy Spirit living right inside of us and we can call upon Him to help us respond with faith and courage.

Acts 16:25

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

They thought they were about to be put to death, yet they continued to praise the Lord. They didn't know a miracle was about to happen!

Acts 16:26-27

Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! (27) The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself.

Jailers in those days were put to death if their prisoners escaped. So, when he thought that Paul and Silas had escaped, the jailer tried to kill himself. But Paul stopped him.

Acts 16:28

But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

When the jailer saw that the prisoners hadn't run away, he realized immediately that God had done a miracle. It was God who caused the earth to shake; it was God who opened the prison gates; it was God who loosed the prisoner's chains.

Acts 16:29-30

The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. (30) Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The jailer had heard Paul and Silas rejoicing in the Lord; now he wanted to know God in the same way, too. The Holy Spirit caused this jailer to realize he needed to be saved. So, Paul told him what he had to do.

Acts 16:31

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

Paul and Silas didn't give the jailer a list of rules to follow in order to get saved! Paul simply told the jailer to believe in Jesus and you will be saved.

Ask: What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus?

It means that we trust that what Jesus did on the cross, satisfied God's wrath against our sin. He hates our sin! He said all sin must be punished.

We all deserve to be punished for the naughty things we do. If we trust that Jesus willingly died and gave His life's blood to pay for our sins, someday we will have eternal life with God in heaven.

Paul and Silas told the jailer that he and anyone else in his family who wanted to, could believe on Jesus and receive eternal life, too.

That's the Good News we need to tell everyone today, too.

Acts 16:32-34

And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. (33) Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. (34) He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

The jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were baptized. Then the jailer brought them food to eat and he and his entire household worshipped the Lord because they were all saved from their sins!

God turned Paul and Silas' pain to joy and victory as the jailer and his family believed in the Lord.

You may not understand why God allows you to go through hard times. Sometimes it's for someone else's benefit. God let Paul and Silas go through that hard time so the jailer and his family would be saved.

So, next time you face a problem, stop felling sorry for yourself! Think about these two "R's":

- **Remember** that God is good and only wants what's best. He has a plan and a purpose in allowing you to go through trials.
- **Rejoice** in the Lord. Thank Him for all He's done for you and sing a praise song to Him.

When you face problems in this life, it doesn't help to think about how tough a time you are having, it only makes your problems seem bigger. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the bigger picture; it will cause you to rejoice in the Lord every time.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, when we go through hard times, help us to remember You are a good God who only wants what is best. Turn our trials into joy knowing You may be using our suffering so that someone else might come to know Your goodness, too. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Cut a yellow circle for each child. On the front draw a smiley face and write out Philippians 4:4. On the back write these steps:

1. Remember something good God has done for you.
2. Rejoice in the Lord by thanking Him.

Encourage children to put the circle in a prominent place where they will see it each day as a reminder.

GAME CENTER

Play *Pictionary* or *Charades* using lesson themes from the past few weeks. Alternate between teams. Give one minute to guess the topic. If Team A guesses correctly they get 1,000 points. If team A doesn't guess it, but Team B does, then Team B gets 500 points.

Print the following lesson theme ideas onto playing cards:

- Ananias and Sapphira Lie
- Early Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit
- God Delivers Peter from Prison
- Paul and Silas Rejoice in Prison
- Peter and John Heal the Lame Man

- Saul Becomes a Believer

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. Where did Paul meet the slave girl? (Down by the riverside outside the city of Philippi.)
2. What did the slave girl do for her owners? (She made them wealthy by telling people's futures!)
3. Why was the slave girl able to tell people's future? (She had an evil spirit of Satan in her; she was possessed.)
4. Why did Paul and Silas get so annoyed with the slave girl if she was actually telling the truth about them? (She was probably calling out in a mocking tone of voice, making fun of Paul and Silas. Paul didn't want the truth of God to be confused with fortune telling.)
5. What did Paul do to the evil spirit in the slave girl? (Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out of the girl.)
6. By Who's power did the evil spirit come out of the slave girl? (The power of the Holy Spirit.)
7. What happened to Paul and Silas when the slave girl's owners realized their business was ruined? (They were beaten and whipped and sent into prison.)
8. What did Paul and Silas do while they were in prison with their backs bleeding and their feet clamped painfully to the wall? (They rejoiced in the Lord!)
9. What would you do if you got sent to prison for no good reason?

10. What sudden surprise happened to Paul and Silas? (There was a great earthquake, the jail doors opened, and their handcuffs dropped off.)
11. Why did the jailer almost kill himself? (He thought that Paul and Silas escaped and he knew the punishment for letting a prisoner escape was certain death.)
12. When the jailer realized that God had done a mighty miracle what did he ask Paul and Silas? ("*What must I do to be saved?*")
13. What did Paul tell the jailer to do to be saved? (Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.)
14. What does it mean *to believe* on Jesus? (To trust that when He was crucified on the cross, He took the full punishment for your sins and satisfied God's wrath against your sin.)
15. Why did God allow Paul and Silas to go through such a horrible trial? (So the jailer and his family would be saved.)
16. When you're in the midst of a trial, what can you do to get your mind off all your troubles? (**R**emember God is good and **R**ejoice in the Lord by thanking Him.)

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<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul in Macedonia

(Acts 17)

Introduction

As we have journeyed through the book of Acts, we have been learning about the Holy Spirit.

Ask: Who is the Holy Spirit? (God, third person of the Trinity).

Ask: What are some things we have learned that the Holy Spirit does? (He's our helper, counselor, comforter, teacher and guide; He gives us courage and power to say *No* to sin and *Yes* to God's way. He tells us the future and reminds us of what God's word says. He gives us the words we need when we are telling people about God. He is the revealer of all truth and He always glorifies God.)

Ask: Does the Holy Spirit only do these things for believers? *No!* In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who gives people understanding so they can become believers in Jesus. He convicts the non-believer of sin and reveals the truth of the gospel, that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for their sins. He draws us into relationship.

The Holy Spirit is constantly trying to communicate with all people. So, why do you think it is that some people do not respond to Him?

That's a very good question, isn't it? In today's lesson, we will discover the answer to this question.

Opening Prayer

Father, Thank You that you send the Holy Spirit. Help us to tune into His voice so that we don't miss a thing He's trying to say to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 ESV)

Lesson

We left Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke off last week in Philippi. Now they travel to Thessalonica. [Locate on map.]

Paul in Thessalonica

In Thessalonica, the team stayed with a man by the name of Jason.

As usual, Paul went to the Synagogue to preach Jesus...

Acts 17:2-3

As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. (3) He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah."

It was always Paul's custom to go to the Synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, to preach the Gospel. The promise of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Jews in the scriptures and Paul wanted to tell them that the Messiah they had been looking for is Jesus!

Acts 17:4

Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.

Some of the Jews were convinced that Jesus really was the Messiah that Jews had been waiting for since the beginning of Time. But some were not convinced.

Acts 17:5-7

*But some of the Jews were **jealous**, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd. (6) Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. "Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world," they shouted, "and now they are here disturbing our city, too. (7) And Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus."*

Ask: What caused people to reject Paul's message? (Look at verse 5. They were jealous.)

When it speaks of the Jews here in verse 5, it is talking about the leaders of the Jewish religion. The Jewish religious leaders tried to block anyone from putting their trust in Jesus because that would cause them to lose control of the people.

Look at what their jealousy caused them to do: The Jews stirred up trouble for the believers. They formed a mob and started a riot and attacked Jason. They dragged Jason and some others before the city council and accused them of breaking the law. Then they forced Jason to pay money to get released.

Acts 17:8-9

The people of the city, as well as the city council, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. (9) So the officials forced Jason and the other believers to post bond, and then they released them.

Because of all the turmoil, later that night, the believers sent Paul and the team to another town called Berea.

Paul in Berea

Acts 17:10-12

*That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to **Berea**. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. (11) And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. (12) As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.*

Here, as Paul was teaching the Bereans about Jesus, they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true. And, the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts and assured them that Paul was telling the truth. So, they very willingly placed their faith in Jesus.

Ask: What made the difference between the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica and the people in Berea? Why were some people receptive and some not?

The Bereans were hungry for the truth. They didn't just accept what Paul said as true, they went home and searched the Scriptures for themselves to see if he was telling them the truth. And they listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As a result, many of them believed. But this made the Jews in Thessalonica angry.

Acts 17:13

But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble.

When the Jewish religious leaders in Thessalonica heard that people in Berea were trusting in Jesus, they traveled there and stirred up trouble. So, the believers in Berea quickly got Paul on a boat that set sail for Athens.

Acts 17:14-15

The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. (15) Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens; then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him.

Paul in Athens

When Paul got to Athens he was deeply troubled about something.

Acts 17:16

*While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was **deeply troubled** by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.*

Athens was a city full of idols. As Paul was walking through the city, he saw all the statues that represented the gods the people of Athens worshipped. The Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom how to speak to these people.

Acts 17:22-23

So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, (23) for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.

Just to make sure they hadn’t left out any gods, they had a statue for an unknown God. So, Paul began to teach them about this unknown God that they worshiped along with all the other idols.

Acts 17:24-25

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, (25) and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

Paul went on to explain how God is the Creator of all things and deserves our worship.

Acts 17:29-31

*And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. (30) “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now **he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.** (31) For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”*

The crowd had different responses to Paul’s message.

Acts 17:32

When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.”

Some people laughed at Paul, but some wanted to hear more about what Paul had to say. Some became believers.

Ask: What can we learn from this? Why is it that some people trust in Jesus for their salvation but others do not? Why is it that some people can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and others do not? [Teacher, let the students discuss.]

Acts 28:27 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.’

Ask: Why did the Berean’s receive the message of the cross?

The Bereans trusted the word of God. They listened to the Holy Spirit.

We must tune our spiritual ears to hear His voice. In other words, we must desire to hear God speaking into our lives.

The very best way to “hear” the voice of God, is by spending time alone with Him, reading His word. The Bible tells us everything we need to know for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

The Holy Spirit is always talking to us. He wants us to know God. The better we know God, the more we will want to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You that You make Yourself known to us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit says. Help us to listen and understand with our spiritual ears. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Snow Ball Fight

Print each question on a separate piece of paper. Wad the papers up and let the children have a “snow ball” fight with them. When you say, “Stop!” The first person on a team answers the question in their “snow ball.” When you say, “Go!” the snowball fight starts up again, this time with one less snowball, however all the kids stay in the game. Go until all the snowballs have been answered, alternately by a child on each team. When you get down to only a few snowballs, the kids will have to be quick to pick up a snowball to throw! Each right answer is worth 1,000 points.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. Why did Paul always go to the Synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, to preach the Gospel? (The promise of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Jews in the scriptures and Paul wanted to tell them that the Messiah they had been looking for is Jesus!)
2. How did people in Thessalonica respond to Paul’s message of the Messiah? (Some believed; others did not.)
3. How did people in Berea respond to Paul’s message? (They studied to see if what Paul taught was true, then gladly placed their faith in Jesus.)
4. What made the difference between the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica and the people in Berea? (The Bereans were hungry for the truth. They searched the scriptures looking for it.)
5. Why did the Jewish religious leaders from Thessalonica go to Berea to stir up trouble? (They were angry that people in Berea were putting their faith in Jesus. They were jealous)
6. Why were these Jewish religious leaders jealous? What were they jealous of? (They were jealous of the power that Jesus had over the people; they realized they were losing control.)
7. What did their jealousy cause the Jewish religious leaders from Thessalonica to do? (They went to Berea to stir up trouble. They formed a mob and started a riot and attacked Jason.)
8. Why was Paul troubled in Athens? (The people worshiped many idols. Verse 16)
9. What are the different responses that people have when they hear the Good News? (Some believe, some don’t believe, some cause trouble trying to get people to stop sharing the gospel.)
10. Why is it that some people trust in Jesus for their salvation but others do not? In other words, why is it that some people can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and others do not? (Some people plug their ears to the voice of the Spirit. They don’t want to hear Him speak.)
11. How does the Holy Spirit speak to people? (Mostly through the scriptures, but also as you observe God’s creation.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul in Ephesus

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey
(Acts 19:1-20)

Introduction

Have you ever been in a completely dark place, a place so dark that you couldn't even see your hand in front of your face? That would be completely and totally dark, wouldn't it? How would you feel if you were in such a place? (Lost, scared, confused, desperate to find light.)

The Bible tells us that a person living life without the truth of the gospel is living in the dark—spiritual darkness. Today in our lesson we are going to focus on how the Holy Spirit is like a light that shines in a person's heart so they can clearly understand what God wants them to see spiritually.

Let's look at the following verses in our Bibles:

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

John 8:12

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

We are each holding a Bible in our hands. This is a very special book that God has given to us. This book is the very Word of God. Every word in this book is true.

God gave us His word so we can know the truth about Him.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to walk in the light so that we do not stumble and fall into a pit of sin. Open our eyes so that we might see the wonder of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Lesson

Last week we left Paul off in Athens. Today Paul travels to Ephesus where he met some men who were disciples.

Before I go on with the story, let's talk about John the Baptist. Who can remind us of who he was?

John the Baptist came on the scene before Jesus. He wanted people to get ready because the Messiah was coming, the Savior they had been waiting for since the beginning of time. So, John the Baptist told people they needed to turn from their sins and be baptized.

If you recall, John told the people that he was baptizing them with water, but the One that would come after him, would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

"I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Now, back to Acts. The Holy Spirit gave Paul the wisdom to know that these men didn't have a full understanding about Jesus.

Acts 19:2-4

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (3) "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." (4) Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."

Paul explained the gospel to these men. He told them that Jesus had lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and then came back to life. He explained that anyone who put their faith in the Lord Jesus could be saved from their sins and receive eternal life.

When these disciples heard Paul clearly teach about Jesus, they believed in Him as their Savior.

Acts 19:5-6

As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.

When God's Word is taught, the Holy Spirit helps those listening to understand God's truth and to clearly see God's plan of salvation. It's like a light goes on in their minds.

Acts 19:8-10

Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. (9) But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. (10) This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to teach boldly in the Jewish synagogue for three months! And it was the Holy Spirit who gave these people a clear understanding about God's plan to save them from their sin. He was turning the light on in their hearts as they heard the truth Paul was teaching them.

Ask: Would it surprise you to know that the Bible talks about people who love darkness instead of light?

John 3:19-21 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were

evil. (20) All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. (21) But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

Most people want to hide their sin. They don't want it displayed for all the world to see. Some people like living a sinful life so much, they do not want to leave the darkness. On the other hand, some people, when their sin is found out, are so ashamed, they want to come clean. They confess their sin and want to be made right again with the person they sinned against and with God.

Every person has a choice to love darkness or love light. To choose to love darkness means to continue to live a sinful life that doesn't please God and keeps them from having a relationship with Him. To choose to love light means to repent and turn from your sinful ways and believe in Jesus who saves you and helps you to no longer want to do sinful wicked things.

God's enemy Satan does everything he can to keep people from understanding what Jesus came to do for us. He wants to keep people in spiritual darkness.

Even though Paul was boldly teaching the truth, some people became stubborn and rejected his message. But Paul didn't get discouraged. He simply stopped teaching in the synagogue, took the believers with him, and started teaching at another place. The Holy Spirit enabled him to continue to faithfully teach God's Word in Ephesus for two years. Soon everyone heard the gospel.

As Paul shared the Good News, the Holy Spirit performed miracles through Paul so that people could see God's power and know that what Paul was telling them was the truth.

Acts 19:11-12

God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. (12) When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

It is important to understand that it was not the objects that healed the people, it was their faith in Jesus that healed them. The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to do these miracles to prove that what he was teaching was the truth. A miracle is something only God Himself can do.

There were some people listening to Paul who were watching all the miracles that Paul was doing and noticing how popular it was making him with the people. So, they wanted to heal people who were being controlled by evil spirits just like Paul so people would notice them.

A group of Jews, traveling from town to town, were trying use the name of Jesus, just like Paul, even though they did not have the Holy Spirit. One time they tried to cast an evil spirit out of a man.

Acts 19:13-16

*A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" (14) **Seven sons of Sceva**, a leading priest, were doing this. (15) But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" (16) Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.*

These seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva tried to copy Paul, but they were not believers in the Lord Jesus and did not have the Holy Spirit.

Only God has authority and power over evil spirits. Evil spirits are not going to obey someone who does not have the Holy Spirit. These seven men were beaten and humiliated by the evil spirit for trying to do God's work in their own power.

When news spread of Sceva's sons, it caused a positive reaction. People were gripped with fear and treated the Lord Jesus' name with great honor and respect.

Acts 19:17-20

The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. (18) Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. (19) A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. (20) So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

Ask: What do you think might have happened to these believers if they had not confessed their sins and burned their magic books?

They needed to make a complete break with their past. Otherwise, if God did not answer their prayers right away or in the way they wanted, it would have been tempting for them to go back to their old ways.

Do you see how the Holy Spirit turned the light on in the hearts of many people who believed in Jesus? The Holy Spirit showed these believers that witchcraft (sorcery) is sin and they confessed their sins and repented. They chose to love light and turn from the darkness and evil.

We have a choice every time we sin. We can choose to stay in our sin or we can choose to walk in the light.

Ask: What do you think will happen if we refuse to confess our sin? We will become bitter and angry and the evil one will use us to stir up trouble in other people's lives.

Ask: What do you think will happen if we come clean with our sin? Our lives will be filled with peace and joy.

Choose to walk before God in the light of life (Psalm 56:13)

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You for shining Your light into our lives so that we can see that Your ways are right and good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Spin the Wheel

Make a spinner with numbers. Upon a correctly answered question, the student spins the wheel to determine points for his/her team.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What is the difference between John the Baptist's baptism and Jesus' baptism? (John baptized those who had turned from their sins with water to get ready for the coming Messiah; Jesus baptizes people who have put their faith in what He did on the cross with the Holy Spirit to give them the power we need to live our lives in a way that pleases God.)
2. When Paul clearly explained the truth of the gospel to the disciples in Ephesus, what did they do? (They believed in Jesus, were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.)
3. Explain what it means to have spiritual light. (To understand who Jesus is and what He came to do for us. To live with the indwelling Holy Spirit.)
4. How is the Holy Spirit like light? (He helps people to clearly understand what God's Word teaches.)
5. Explain what it means to have spiritual darkness. (To live a life without the Holy Spirit.)
6. How can you know whether you are a person who loves light or loves darkness? (If you love light, you will love Jesus and want to please Him; if you love darkness, you will enjoy sin and evil.)
7. Why did the Holy Spirit enable Paul to perform miracles? (The Holy Spirit performed miracles through Paul so that people could see God's power and know that what Paul was telling them was the truth.)
8. What happened to the sick people who touched Paul's handkerchiefs or apron? (They were healed.)
9. What healed the sick people? (It was their faith in Jesus that healed them. It was not Paul's power, nor was it the handkerchief; it was the power of the Holy Spirit.)
10. Why were Sceva's sons beaten and humiliated by an evil spirit? (They tried to cast out an evil spirit without the power of the Holy Spirit.)
11. Why did the seven sons of Sceva try to cast out the evil spirit? (They wanted to be famous, like Paul.)
12. Why couldn't the sons of Sceva perform the miracle? (They did not have the power of the Holy Spirit.)
13. How did the news of the sons of Sceva's humiliation cause a positive reaction? (People were gripped with fear and treated the Lord Jesus' name with great honor and respect.)
14. What happened to the sons of Sceva's clothes? (The evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence it ripped their clothes off.)

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Riot in Ephesus

(Acts 19:23-42)

Introduction

It can be tempting to want to please your friends more than you want to please God. Everyone wants friends. Sometimes we are tempted to do things that we know are wrong just to be accepted by a group of kids at school. [Teacher, share a personal experience that would be age appropriate for your class.]

Our verse today says, “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong.”

It should be obvious to anyone that we are not to do wrong, but this verse singles out doing wrong by following a crowd. Why? Because it is often so much easier to do wrong when you are in a crowd than when you are alone. For in a crowd there is often a real pressure to do what they do or risk being laughed at, or worse, actually being physical attacked. We call this being bullied, don't we?

In our lesson today we will learn that a huge crowd of people were led to do something that was illegal just because everyone else was doing it.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to stand strong for what is good and right. Help us not to be concerned about seeking approval from our friends more than wanting Your approval. Help us to think for ourselves and to desire to live our lives in a way that pleases you, no matter what everyone else is doing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

“You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice. (Exodus 23:2)

Lesson

Last week we learned that Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years. His ministry was so effective, that all of the people who lived in the province of Asia heard the gospel.

Many people in Ephesus worshiped the goddess Artemis. In fact, they had a beautiful temple built for people to come and worship her. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul the boldness to tell people that there is only one true God and that idols were not gods at all.

There was a silversmith by the name of Demetrius who made a lot of money making silver statues for people to buy and take home so they could worship the goddess Artemis at home.

Paul was a big threat to his business, so Demetrius stirred up the people against Paul.

Acts 19:23-24

About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. (24) It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy.

Demetrius gathered other business owners together and told them that the message Paul was teaching was bad for business because it would make people turn from worshipping Artemis.

Acts 19:25-27

He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows: “Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. (26) But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! (27) Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!”

These business owners were furious! They loved Artemis and were loyal to this false goddess.

Acts 19:28

At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Over and over, they chanted until a great crowd started shouting. Soon the streets were filled with crowds and a riot broke out.

Acts 19:29

Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Two men that Paul had been traveling with were captured by the angry citizens and forced into a large theater. A large mob of people crowded into the theater, too.

When Paul heard that his friends had been taken by the angry crowd, he wanted to rescue them, but his friends were afraid that he would get hurt.

Acts 19:30-31

Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. (31) Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

Even some of the leaders of Ephesus begged Paul not to go into that theater.

Inside the theater, chaos and confusion filled the air. For two whole hours people were shouting. Most of the people in the crowd had no idea what was going on or why there were even there.

Acts 19:32

Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there.

Some people in the crowd were shouting but they didn't even know what it was all about. They were doing it because everyone else was shouting. They were just following the crowd.

There is a lesson here for us: You can get in big trouble by just going along with whatever the crowd is doing. Suppose your "friends" think it would be fun to damage someone's property; break some windows, or spray some paint on things? These so-called "friends" have in fact become your enemies if they try to get you to do wrong.

Finally, the mayor of the city quieted the crowd down.

Acts 19:35-37

At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. "Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. (36) Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. (37) You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess.

God's enemy Satan used Demetrius to cause chaos and confusion, but the mayor told the people the city of Ephesus to stay calm. He explained that they had rules against unruly conduct and that they didn't have a good reason to be out of control. He knew that the Romans could have punished them for the noise and trouble they were causing.

The city of Ephesus was under the rule of the Roman Empire (just like Israel was) and it was the responsibility of the local city leaders to maintain peace and order. Otherwise, the Romans could come down hard on the people. [The city could have been put under martial law, losing many civic freedoms.]

Acts 19:38-39

"If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make

formal charges. (39) And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly.

The mayor told Demetrius if he had a problem with Paul, he needed to take it to court. He needed to follow the city rules and do things legally. He then dismissed the crowd and Paul was unharmed.

Acts 19:40-41

I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." (41) Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

The mayor was able to quiet the crowd down, but this riot in Ephesus showed Paul that it was time to move on. Let's look back at verse 21.

Acts 19:21

Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. "And after that," he said, "I must go on to Rome!"

After these events, Paul felt that the Holy Spirit was telling him to go to Jerusalem. Then he said, "After that, I must go on to Rome."

Paul's ministry in Ephesus made a huge impact for the kingdom of God there in the province of Asia. The church flourished because of the faithfulness of Paul and his companions. But now Paul knew the Holy Spirit was moving him on.

I am amazed at how Paul remained faithful to God in spite of all the trouble and difficulties he went through. Most of us would have quit if we went through the things Paul did. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul endurance and confidence and courage to stay faithful and strong.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Paul remained faithful to You in spite of all the trouble and difficulties he went through. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may remain faithful to You no matter what we face in life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Big Question Mark —

On a big poster board, make a huge question mark with little slits. In the slits place small coin-shaped pieces that have point values on them. For every correct answer, the team gets to choose a piece for points. Zonk! Means none.



Or use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who did most of the people living in Ephesus worship? (Artemis)
2. Why did Paul's message bother Demetrius, the silversmith? (He was afraid he would lose business.)
3. What happened when Demetrius gathered other business owners together and told them that the message Paul was teaching was bad for business? (They started a riot.)
4. What happened to the two men that were traveling with Paul? (They were captured by the angry citizens and forced into a large theater.)
5. Why didn't Paul go in to rescue his friends? (The other believers wouldn't let him because they were afraid he'd get hurt.)

6. What happened inside the theater? (Chaos and confusion broke out. People were shouting.)
7. Why did some people in the crowd join in shouting even though they didn't know what it was all about? (They were just going along with the crowd.)
8. Have you ever been tempted to do something you know would be wrong just because all your friends are doing it?
9. How did the city mayor get the people to calm down and go home? (He told them they needed to follow the rules of the Roman Empire or they could get severely punished.)
10. What did the mayor tell Demetrius? (If he had a problem with Paul, to take it to court. He needed to follow the city rules and do things legally.)
11. What kept Paul faithful and strong in his ministry in spite of all the trouble and difficulties he had? (The power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge that the gospel was true.)
12. What have you learned from this lesson?

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Paul's Farewell Journey Begins

(Acts 20)

Introduction

Have you ever been given a hard job to do, like cleaning the house or weeding the garden? Did you stick with it and finish the job? Or, did you get tired and feel like giving up?

We have been on a journey through the Book of Acts.

We met Paul when he persecuted believers. We travelled with him on the road to Damascus where he met the Lord Jesus Christ and became a follower of Christ. As we have read about his life from the pages of Scripture, we have learned that although he went through many trials, he was a faithful man of God.

The Holy Spirit had given the Apostle Paul a very difficult job assignment. He was to go into all the world and tell everyone the Good News that Jesus had died for their sins and if they would just put their trust in Jesus, they could have eternal life.

But not everyone wanted to hear the Good News. Paul endured a lot of difficulties. Let's review...

When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch in Pisidia, Paul preached the message of the cross but the Jewish religious leaders were jealous.

Acts 13:50

*Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and **they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town.***

Then Paul went to Iconium. There the Jewish religious leaders poisoned the minds of the people against Paul (vs 2).

Acts 14:5

Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.

Next, Paul went to Lystra.

Acts 14:19

*Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. **They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead.***

Then, in Philippi, a slave girl with an evil spirit followed Paul and made fun of him. Her owners grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place.

Acts 16:22-24

*A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them **stripped and beaten** with wooden rods. (23) They were severely beaten, and then they were **thrown into prison**. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. (24) So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.*

But if you remember an angel miraculously rescued them.

Paul went through a lot of persecution. Yet he never give up because the Holy Spirit gave him a passion to tell people about Jesus. He is a wonderful example to us of a faithful follower of Christ.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be faithful followers of You, just like Paul. Give us the heart to follow through and finish the jobs we are given in life so that in the end, our lives will bring Your name glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20:24 NIV)

Lesson

Last week, we learned that there was a riot in Ephesus.

Ask: Who can tell us what happened in Ephesus?

Remember, many people in Ephesus worshiped the goddess Artemis. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul the boldness to tell people that there is only one true God and that idols were not gods at all.

There was a silversmith by the name of Demetrius, who made silver statues of the goddess Artemis which made him a lot of money.

Paul was a big threat to his business so Demetrius stirred up the people against Paul. These business owners were furious and a huge uprising broke out.

The riot in Ephesus showed Paul that it was time to move on from there. Besides, Paul was anxious to get to Jerusalem and then he wanted to go to Rome.

Acts 20:1

When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia.

After Paul spent some time in Macedonia, he traveled to Greece.

Acts 20:2-3

While there, he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to Greece, where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back to Syria when he discovered a plot by some Jews against his life, so he decided to return through Macedonia.

From Greece, he was planning to sail back to Syria, but when he heard some Jews were plotting to kill him, he changed his mind and headed back to Macedonia. [Teacher, show on map.]

As Paul traveled through all the towns and villages he had been in before, he continued to encourage the people in their faith.

[Teacher, trace Paul's travels on a good Bible map.]

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper. Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

In Troas, the believers were gathered together in an upstairs room of a house. Paul taught the people for hours. It was getting very late but the people were eager to hear what he was teaching them about Jesus before he left the next day.

That night a young man (possibly between 8- and 14-years old) was sitting in a window sill and he began to fall asleep.

Acts 20:8-9

The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. (9) As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below.

He fell to his death, so Paul ran down the stairs and put his arms around this boy.

Acts 20:10

Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!"

The power of the Holy Spirit healed the young man and he was raised back to life. Once Eutychus was back on his feet, Paul returned upstairs to teach until daylight.

Acts 20:11-12

Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord's Supper, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. (12) Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.

Paul didn't have a lot of time left to get to Jerusalem in time to celebrate the day of Pentecost. He knew he wouldn't have time to go

through Ephesus, so he sent for the leaders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus. There Paul shared a message with them.

Acts 20:17-21

*But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him. (18) When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now (19) I have done the Lord's work **humbly** and with many tears. I have **endured the trials** that came to me from the plots of the Jews. (20) I **never shrank back** from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. (21) I have had **one message** for Jews and Greeks alike—the **necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God**, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.*

Ask: What can we learn about Paul from the things he shared with the church leaders in Miletus in verses 17-21? [Teacher, discuss....]

- Paul served the Lord with great humility and tears. (Verse 19)
- Paul endured many evil plots from the Jews. (Verse 19)
- Paul faithfully taught everything he could to help other believers. (Verse 20)
- Paul shared the Good News with Jews and Greeks alike, telling them that everyone must repent of their sins and have faith in Jesus. (Verse 21)

Paul told the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit was leading him back to Jerusalem and he was going even though he didn't know what was going to happen to him there. He only knew that in every city the Holy Spirit warned him that he would face prison and hardships.

Acts 20:22-24

*"And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, (23) except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. (24) But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for **finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News** about the wonderful grace of God.*

Paul was faithful to what he knew the Holy Spirit had called him to do and that was to go throughout the world and tell everyone everywhere that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

In spite of all the hardships and difficulties that he faced, he stayed true to what he knew the Holy Spirit had called him to do. Most of us would have given up. We might have said, "*Forget it! I don't need all this bother in my life.*" But Paul wanted to finish his job well.

Then Paul told them that they would never see his face again.

Acts 20:25

"And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again.

Since Paul knew that he would not see these believers again, he gave them instructions to take care of the followers of Christ that they were responsible for.

Acts 20:28-30

"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. (29) I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. (30) Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.

Paul warned them that false teachers would come into their churches and try to lead people away from God's truth.

Acts 20:36-38

When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. (37) They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. (38) They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

It was time to say farewell to these believers from Ephesus. Their hearts were sad because Paul said they would never see his face

again. They loved this man who faithfully and sacrificially served them.

Paul told the leaders of the church at Ephesus that he needed to finish strong as he headed to Jerusalem, where he was certain to face more persecution. But he was determined to finish the work the Holy Spirit had given him to do—tell every man, woman and child the Good News about Jesus even when he was persecuted for telling it.

He wasn't concerned about himself; he desperately wanted everyone to come to know Jesus.

When we are facing something hard, it is easy to get discouraged and want to give up. But not Paul! He knew God had given him a race to run and he wanted to finish strong.

What about you? What do you do when the going gets tough? Do you just feel like giving up? What do you need to do to keep going so your life can bring glory to God?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help me to keep going on this journey with You in life. I want to finish strong so others will see that I was faithful to You and You get the glory for my life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Checker game

Place at least eight red and eight black checkers or plastic game pieces in a small paper bag. Divide the children in two teams and have them take turns answering questions. As a child answers a question correctly, he may reach into the bag and pull out a checker for his team. If he chooses a red checker, he gets to keep the checker

and draw again. If he draws a black checker he keeps it but his turn is finished. At the end of the game, the team with the most checkers (red and black) wins.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, but what made him decide to head to Macedonia first? (Vs 3. Some Jews had plotted against him, so he changed his route.)
2. Why did Paul want to go to Jerusalem? (Vs 16. He wanted to be there for the day of Pentecost.)
3. Why did Paul keep on teaching so long? (Vs 7. He was leaving the next morning and he knew he wouldn't see these people again.)
4. What happened to Eutychus? (Vs 9. He fell asleep listening to Paul and he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.)
5. How did Paul bring Eutychus back to life? (Vs 10. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him.)
6. What did Paul do after he brought Eutychus back to life? (Vs 11. He went back upstairs, broke bread and ate, then continued teaching the people.)
7. What time did Paul go to sleep that night? (Vs 11. He didn't; he kept teaching the people until daylight.)
8. Why did Paul decide to sail past Ephesus? (Vs 16. To avoid spending time in visiting all his old friends. He knew it would delay his trip and he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem.)

9. In verses 17-21 we learn a lot about Paul's character. What is one thing you learned about Paul from these verses? (Look back at the notes for these verses.)
10. Why did Paul want to go to Jerusalem if he knew he was going to face prison and hardships? (Vs 22-23. He knew that the Holy Spirit was leading him to go.)
11. Why did Paul consider his life worth noting to him? (Vs 24. His only aim in life was to do what the Holy Spirit had told him to do.)
12. What was Paul's final warning to the Ephesian leaders? (Vs 28-31. Take care of the people; false teachers will come into the churches. Be on your guard.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul Arrested in Jerusalem

(Acts 21:1-36)

Introduction

We have talked about all the trials and difficult situations that Paul found himself in as he traveled from place to place sharing the Good News with people.

Towards the end of his life, Paul wrote to the Corinthians and listed some of the persecution he had faced in his life.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 [Teacher, read the following. He was comparing himself to false teachers who had been boasting.]

Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. (24) Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. (26) I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. (27) I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. (28) Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches.

Phew! That is a lot of persecution! The evil one is always at work trying to stop people from sharing the Good News. But Paul continued to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit because he knew Jesus was the true Messiah and he trusted that the Holy Spirit would protect him as he obeyed the Spirit's leading.

In our lesson last time, we learned that the Holy Spirit was urging Paul to go to Jerusalem. He didn't know why, but in every city he visited, the Holy Spirit warned him that prison and hardship were facing him.

Acts 20:22-23

"And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, (23) except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead.

Boy, that kind of warning would make me want to stay in bed and not go anywhere. It would scare me. How would you feel?

As followers of Jesus, we are not to do anything in our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). Paul knew that the Holy Spirit gave him the power and the confidence he needed to go through whatever situation he faced. And He will do the same for you.

Opening Prayer

Father, Paul faced so many hard situations, yet he didn't give up. He kept on being faithful to You. We ask that You give us the confidence we need to be faithful and true to You, no matter what we face in life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble? (Psalms 27:1)

Lesson

In our last lesson, we left Paul in Miletus where he had met with the elders from the church in Ephesus. This week Paul gets on a ship and heads to Jerusalem.

[Teacher, trace the voyage from Miletus to Tyre.]

Finally, the ship landed in the city of Tyre where it had to unload its cargo. So, Paul and his team went ashore.

Acts 21:4

We went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.

Again, the Holy Spirit was speaking through the believers there, telling Paul what to expect when he got to Jerusalem. They didn't want Paul to face danger, so they pleaded with him not to go. But Paul knew that he must go.

Acts 21:5-6

When we returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire congregation, including women and children, left the city and came down to the shore with us. There we knelt, prayed, (6) and said our farewells. Then we went aboard, and they returned home.

Everyone went down to the docks with Paul to see him off. They prayed with him and said their good byes.

After leaving Tyre, they went on to Caesarea.

Acts 21:8

The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food.

We have met Philip in the book of Acts on several occasions. In chapter 7, we were first introduced to him as one of the seven men chosen to serve food to the widows along with Stephen who was stoned to death. In chapter 8, we learned that Philip shared the gospel with Simon the sorcerer, in Samaria. Then right after that, later in chapter 8, the Holy Spirit told Philip to share the Good News with the Ethiopian in the chariot.

While Paul and his team were staying with Philip, a prophet by the name of Agabus came to visit.

We met Agabus back in chapter 11 when he predicted that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world (Acts 11:28). If you remember, this prophesy prompted Paul to gather a gift to send down to the believers in Jerusalem.

While staying at Philip's house, Agabus did something kind of strange.

Acts 21:10-11

Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. (11) He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'"

Agabus did a little skit to act out the kind of persecution that Paul was going to face in Jerusalem. They all knew that certain danger was waiting for Paul, so the believers begged Paul not to go.

[Teacher, demonstrate this!]

Acts 21:12-14

When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. (13) But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." (14) When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

The believers meant well. They loved Paul and it was heart breaking for them to think of him facing danger. But the Holy Spirit had clearly told Paul what to do and he could not allow the concern of the others to keep him from obeying God. Paul had confidence that the Holy Spirit would enable him to face any situation.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Paul and his team were welcomed by the believers there. Paul told them about all the wonderful things God had done among the Gentiles in each place he traveled.

Acts 21:20-22

After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. (21) But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. (22) What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

The Jewish believers had been misinformed about what Paul had been teaching the Gentiles. They were spreading outright lies about Paul. So, they suggested that Paul prove to the Jewish believers that there was no truth to these rumors.

Acts 21:23-24

"Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. (24) Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws.

They were telling Paul to prove to the Jewish believers that he was truly dedicated to God by going to the Temple and going through the Jewish purification ceremony. So, Paul said he would do it.

When Paul was at the Temple, trouble broke out just about the time the purification ceremony was over.

Acts 21:27-29

The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, (28) yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." (29) (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

Unbelieving Jews had followed Paul all the way from Asia to Jerusalem. They stirred up trouble and accused Paul of taking a Gentile into the Temple area.

[Teacher, show a diagram of the Temple and point out that although Gentiles were not allowed inside the Temple, there were places Gentiles could worship.]

Paul had not disobeyed the traditions of the Jewish people but because he was traveling with a Gentile and was at the Temple, the crowds assumed he broke God's laws.

The crowd went crazy and came from all directions and grabbed Paul.

Acts 21:30-32

The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. (31) As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

Someone sent for the Roman army commander. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers coming, they stopped beating Paul.

The commander arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with chains. Then the commander tried to find out what the problem was all about, but no one gave him a clear answer. Since the commander couldn't get the real facts, he ordered that Paul be taken and placed in the barracks.

Acts 21:33-36

Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done. (34) Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn't find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress. (35) As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the

soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. (36) And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

The crowd went crazy and Paul's life was in danger, so the soldiers picked Paul up and carried him out of the crowd. While the crowd shouted, "*Kill him, kill him!*" But Paul stayed calm!

Ask: How do you think Paul was able to stay calm in the midst of this riot and people shouting, "*Kill him, kill him!*"?

The Holy Spirit gave him courage. Paul trusted fully that God would take care of him. He had already been warned that bad things were going to happen to him so he wasn't surprised. He knew he could face anything as long as he obeyed God.

Next week we will learn more about Paul's arrest in Jerusalem.

Ask: How has Paul's example encouraged you to be strong in the Lord?

Let's say you are facing an important test at school. Or, maybe you have to deal with a bully. If you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives inside you and will help you with whatever situation you face.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Your word says, "*I can do all things through him who strengthen me*" (Phil 4:13). Thank You that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank You that you will never allow us to go through anything we cannot handle with Your help. Thank You for the power of the Holy Spirit that gives us courage and strength to do everything that You have called us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Ping Pong Ball Toss

Write point numbers in the cups of two egg cartons. Place the two cartons long sides together. Divide the children into two teams. Give a child from each team 3 tosses of the ball for every right answer. The team with the highest points gets two pieces of candy while the other team gets one piece.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. Where was Paul traveling to? (Jerusalem.)
2. Why were the believers in Tyre urging Paul not to go to Jerusalem? (The Holy Spirit revealed to them that Paul would face difficulties there.)
3. What did the believers do at the beach before the ship set sail from Tyre? (Vs 5. Knelt in prayer.)
4. Who did Paul stay with in Caesarea? (Vs 8. Philip.)
5. What did Agabus prophesy about Paul? (Vs 11. He was going to be bound by Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.)
6. How did Agabus tell Paul what to expect in Jerusalem? (Vs 11. took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it.)
7. Why did Paul not allow the believers to change his mind about going to Jerusalem? (He knew the Holy Spirit told him to go to Jerusalem. He knew he needed to obey God. He trusted God to protect him. Paul had confidence that the Holy Spirit would enable him to face any situation.)

8. What did the believers in Jerusalem encourage Paul to do to prove he was a faithful follower of God? (Vs 24. Take a vow in the Jewish Temple.)
9. What did the unbelieving Jews accuse Paul of doing in Jerusalem? (Vs 28. Taking a Gentile into the temp courts.)
10. Who arrested Paul? (Vs 33. The Roman commander.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul Testifies in Jerusalem

(Acts 21:37 – 22:30)

Introduction

In our last lesson, Paul had arrived in Jerusalem. He was warmly welcomed by the believers there. But they told him that some Jewish believers had been spreading lies about Paul. They accused him of teaching the Gentiles to turn their backs on the law of Moses. They also accused Paul of taking a Gentile into the Temple.

Trouble broke out. A huge riot started. The crowd grabbed Paul and began to beat him. The Roman army commander was called and he arrested Paul. The crowd went crazy and Paul's life was in danger.

We left off last time with Paul being carried up the stairs to the barracks by soldiers and people screaming, "Kill him! Kill him!"

Today, as we continue this exciting story of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, we learn that just as the Holy Spirit gave Paul courage and just the right words to say to people, He gives us courage in scary situations, too.

Opening Prayer

Father, as we get to know You and how Your Holy Spirit works in our lives, we begin to trust You more and more with everything in our lives. You give us courage as we face difficult situations and You give us the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can live our lives in ways that please You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 ESV)

Lesson

The soldiers carried Paul safely to the top of the steps and were just about to take him into the barracks when Paul turned to the Roman army commander and asked to speak with him.

Acts 21:37-39

As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?" "Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. (38) "Aren't you the Egyptian who led a rebellion some time ago and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert?" (39) "No," Paul replied, "I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city. Please, let me talk to these people."

Evidently the Roman army commander had no idea who Paul was and why there was all this commotion going on. So, Paul told the commander who he was and asked if he could speak to the crowd.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have a clear mind in the middle of such chaos. And then the Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom to know he had an opportunity to share the Good News with this angry crowd.

Acts 21:40

The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

Ask: Have you ever shared with anyone about the wonderful things that God has done for you in your life? It can be scary, but the Holy Spirit can give you boldness to share your testimony in a difficult situation, too.

Let's read what Paul said to this angry crowd that wanted to kill him.

Acts 22:1-5

"Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said, "listen to me as I offer my defense." (2) When they heard him speaking in their own language, the silence was even greater. (5) Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. (4) And I persecuted the

followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. (5) The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

[Gamaliel was a famous and well-respected Jewish rabbi and a leader in the Jewish Sanhedrin.]

Paul explains that he is a true Jew, trained in the Jewish laws and traditions. He tells them he understands their anger because he once persecuted anyone who taught that Jesus was the Messiah.

Then Paul tells them how he came to understand that Jesus was truly the promised Messiah they had been waiting for since the beginning of time.

Acts 22:6-8

“As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. (7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ (8) “Who are you, lord?’ I asked. “And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.’

Then Paul told the crowd that God sent a man named Ananias to tell him what he must do now that he believed in Jesus.

Acts 22:14-16

“Then he told me, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. (15) For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. (16) What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’

After Paul became a believer, he went to Jerusalem because he wanted to share the Good News with other Jews. He thought surely, they would believe him when they saw the great change the Holy Spirit had made in his life. But Jesus told him that the people in Jerusalem wouldn't believe him.

Acts 22:17-18

“After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. (18) I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.’

Paul wanted to share the gospel with the Jews but Jesus told Paul to leave Jerusalem because the Jewish people there would not believe him. The Lord knew that many Jews would reject Paul and the Good News about Jesus. That's why God sent Paul to share with the Gentiles.

Acts 22:21

*“But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the **Gentiles!**’”*

The crowd listened attentively to Paul until he mentioned the *Gentiles*.

Acts 22:22

The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!”

When the crowd turned angry again, the Roman Army commander stepped in.

Acts 22:23-24

They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air. (24) The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious.

The Holy Spirit helped Paul be calm and patient. As he was led away to be whipped by the soldiers, he didn't fight or argue. Instead, he calmly spoke to the commander.

Acts 22:25

When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer standing there, "Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried?"

The soldiers stopped beating him.

Acts 22:26-27

When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked, "What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!" (27) So the commander went over and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I certainly am," Paul replied.

When the Roman army commander learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, he stopped the soldiers from beating him and decided to let the Jewish religious leaders deal with Paul instead.

Acts 22:30

The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council. He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

Next week we will pick up the story with Paul going before the Jewish religious leaders.

Today we have learned that the Holy Spirit gave Paul boldness and patience to speak calmly to this angry crowd about the truth of the gospel and the goodness of God.

We can trust the Holy Spirit to enable us to have wisdom and boldness to share our love for Jesus with others, too. We have the same Holy Spirit that Paul had!

God wants us to share with other people about His goodness. He wants us to tell people about all the wonderful things He has done for us in our lives.

Jesus commands us to go out and tell everyone everywhere about Him. He wants every person in the whole world to know that He came and died for their sins. If people would put their trust in what Jesus did for them on the cross, they, too, will receive eternal life and be able to live with Jesus forever in heaven.

Ask: Have you shared your faith with anyone? What was your experience?

The Holy Spirit is ready and able to help you be strong and courageous. He'll give you just the right words to say.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You want us to share the Good News with others so much that You are just waiting for us to ask You to give us the right words to say to people and the courage to say it. Thank You for being such a faithful God. We love You so much and want all of our friends and family to come to know You, too. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Pass the Chicken

Sit students in a circle. Ask a child a question and hand the chicken to the student sitting next to him to start passing it around the circle. The student must answer the question correctly before the chicken comes back around to him or her.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. Why did the Roman army commander order that Paul be arrested? (21:34. The Jews were trying to kill Paul and the Commander couldn't find out why, so he ordered that Paul to be taken to the fortress.)

2. Why did the soldiers have to lift Paul to their shoulders? (Vs 21:35. The mob grew so violent the soldiers lifted him up to protect him from the angry crowd who wanted to kill him.)
3. When the soldiers carried Paul up the stairs towards the Barracks, what did Paul ask the Roman army commander? (Vs 21:37. Paul asked if he could speak to the crowd.)
4. Who did the Roman army commander think Paul was at first? (Vs 21:38. He thought Paul was the Egyptian who led a rebellion and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert.)
5. What did Paul share with the crowd? (Vs 22:2. Paul assured them that he was a true Jew, trained in the Jewish laws and traditions, but that he was now a follower of Jesus.)
6. Why did the crowd get angry when Paul spoke to them? (Vs 22:21 He said that God sent him to share the Good News with the Gentiles.)
7. Why did it make the crowd angry that Paul would share the gospel with the Gentiles? (The Jews thought the Gentiles were inferior, after all, weren't they God's '*Chosen People*'?)
8. Why did the Roman army commander stop the soldiers from whipping Paul? (Vs 22:27. Paul told the commander that he was a Roman citizen. And it was illegal to punish a Roman citizen before proving they committed a crime.)
9. What did the Roman army commander decide to do with Paul once he heard that Paul was a Roman citizen? (Vs 22:30. He ordered that Paul stand in front of the Jewish religious leaders.)
10. Why didn't Paul try to fight or argue with the soldiers, as they led him away to be whipped? (Vs 25. Paul was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit who enabled him to speak calmly to the commander.)

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God Protects Paul's Life

(Acts 22:30—23:35)

Introduction

We have been learning a lot about the Holy Spirit through our journey in the book of Acts, haven't we?

What are some things you have learned that the Holy Spirit does for us? [Teacher, lead the student to remember some of the following.]

He's our helper, counselor, comforter, teacher and guide; He tells us the future and reminds us of what God's word says. He gives us the words we need when we are telling people about God. He is the revealer of all truth and He always glorifies God.

It is the Holy Spirit that gives you the power to obey God; that is, to say *No* to sin and *Yes* to God's way. It is the Holy Spirit that helps you to be brave in difficult situations; to stand up and do the right thing, or say the right thing, even when everyone else is doing the wrong thing.

When you are naughty, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts you that you have sinned and need to confess your sin to God. After your sin is forgiven, it is the Holy Spirit that fills your heart with peace and joy because you know that your relationship with God has been made right again.

Although the Holy Spirit is invisible, He is always at work in our lives leading us and guiding us and telling us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of our lives. And, He will do everything He can to protect you and enable you to fulfill His plan.

We have an exciting lesson today, so pay attention to how the Holy Spirit leads Paul and protects him from being harmed. We will learn that God has a plan for Paul's life and nothing can stop God's plan!

Opening Prayer

Father, it is a comfort to know that we are in Your plan and that nothing can stop You from using us in your grand plan for life. Sometimes it may get messy or scary, but we can trust You with our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me. (Psalms 31:3 NKJ)

Lesson

As Paul was traveling towards Jerusalem, he had been clearly warned that trouble was ahead for him. Sure enough, when he got there, he was arrested because the Jews started a huge riot. They thought Paul had been teaching people to ignore God's laws so they wanted to kill him.

The Jews caused such unrest, the Roman commander was about to have Paul whipped and thrown into the barracks. Who remembers what stopped him from doing that?

When the commander learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, he stopped the soldiers from beating him because it was illegal to punish a Roman citizen before proving he committed a crime. Instead, the commander decided to let the Jewish religious leaders deal with Paul.

So, we pick up the story of Paul's arrest with the last verse of chapter 22.

Acts 22:30

The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council. He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

The commander wanted to figure out what crime Paul had committed to cause the Jews to want to kill him, so he gathered the Jewish religious leaders and had Paul brought before them.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul not to be frightened by the religious leaders that he stood before. He gave Paul courage. He wasn't worried or scared of these powerful religious leaders.

Acts 23:1

Gazing intently at the high council, Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

He knew that he had always lived a godly life. He believed that he had been obedient to all that God had asked him to do. But when the high priest heard Paul say that, he ordered someone standing next to Paul to slap him in the face.

Acts 23:2-3

Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. (3) But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

Paul was saying, "You sit here to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck." You see, it was against God's law to strike a person who had not been proven guilty of breaking any law.

Acts 23:4-5

Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?" (5) "I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.'"

Evidently, Paul did not realize that this was the high priest that commanded Paul be slapped on the mouth. He was instantly sorry he had been disrespectful to the high priest. He knew that God wants us to show respect those who are in authority over us.

But watch how the Holy Spirit gives Paul wisdom at this point: The council of religious leaders (the Sanhedrin) was made up of two groups: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These groups had very

different views about spiritual matters. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. They believed in heaven and the possibility of spending eternity with God. The Sadducees, on the other hand, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They rejected the idea of an afterlife in heaven with God.

Let's see how Paul, who was brought up as a Pharisee, took advantage of this difference between these two groups in the Jewish high council.

Acts 23:6-8

Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!" (7) This divided the council--the Pharisees against the Sadducees-- (8) for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these.

An argument broke out between these two groups and suddenly the focus was not on Paul, but on their different opinion about the afterlife.

Acts 23:9-10

*So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him." (10) As the conflict grew more violent, **the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart**. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.*

The two groups argued and became so violent that the Roman army commander was afraid they would tear Paul into pieces. So, he ordered soldiers to take Paul away from the religious leaders by force.

So, can you see God's hand in this? God used the Roman soldiers to protect Paul and he was taken to the barracks where he was safe from the angry Jewish religious leaders.

Acts 23:11

That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

The Holy Spirit is faithful to comfort us and help us when we face difficult circumstances. That night He appeared to Paul and encouraged him by telling him He had a plan and a purpose in allowing Paul to go through this trial.

But wait! There's more excitement about to happen! While Paul was safe in the barracks, unbelieving Jews were plotting evil against Paul.

Acts 23:12-15

*The next morning a group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an **oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul**. (13) There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. (14) They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, "We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. (15) **So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way.**"*

More than forty unbelieving Jews came up with a plan to end Paul's life. First, they threatened to not eat or drink anything until Paul was killed. Then they told the religious leaders to ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again to ask him more questions. Their plan was to ambush Paul on his way to the council.

But as these men were plotting to kill Paul, his young nephew just happened to overhear their conversation.

Acts 23:16-17

But Paul's nephew—his sister's son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul. (17) Paul called for one of the Roman officers and said, "Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him."

Do you see God's hand in this? There are no coincidences for God's children. God placed Paul's nephew at the right place at the right time for an important purpose.

Acts 23:18-22

So the officer did, explaining, "Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." (19) The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" (20) Paul's nephew told him, "Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information. (21) But don't do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent." (22) "Don't let anyone know you told me this," the commander warned the young man.

Ask: What risk did Paul's nephew take? (They could have killed him.)

If you heard that someone was planning to hurt someone else, would you have the courage to do what you know is right? The Holy Spirit will give you courage if you ask Him for it.

God used Paul's nephew to protect Paul from being killed. The commander listened to this boy and prepared 470 soldiers to take Paul to safety.

Acts 23:23-24

Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. (24) Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix."

The commander wrote a letter to the governor explaining why he was sending Paul to him.

Acts 23:27-30

“This man was seized by some Jews, and they were about to kill him when I arrived with the troops. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I removed him to safety. (28) Then I took him to their high council to try to learn the basis of the accusations against him. (29) I soon discovered the charge was something regarding their religious law—certainly nothing worthy of imprisonment or death. (30) But when I was informed of a plot to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have told his accusers to bring their charges before you.”

Paul arrived safely in Caesarea with the letter to Felix.

Acts 23:33

When they arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul and the letter to Governor Felix.

After Felix read the letter from the Roman commander, he said that until those who were accusing Paul of committing a crime came, he would be guarded by soldiers in King Herod's palace.

Acts 23:34-35

He read it and then asked Paul what province he was from. “Cilicia,” Paul answered. (35) “I will hear your case myself when your accusers arrive,” the governor told him. Then the governor ordered him kept in the prison at Herod's headquarters.

Paul's enemies plotted to end his life. But God is in control and had a plan and a purpose for Paul. No one was going to end Paul's life until God's purposes for him were complete.

God has a plan and a purpose for your life, as well. If you have put your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will give you courage, wisdom and protection as you live your life for Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You have a plan and a purpose for our lives. Help us to have confidence as we walk in obedience to Your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Tic-Tac-Toe

Draw a large tic-tac-toe grid on the chalkboard. Write the following names or words on the grid, one word per square: **Ananias, Paul's nephew, Sanhedrin, rescue, commander, plans, Paul, the Lord, and plot.**

Divide the class into two teams (the **X's** and the **O's**). A player on the first team will select a square. If the player correctly answers a question about the person or thing named in that square, the player's team gets to mark its letter (**X** or **O**) in the square. If the player cannot answer the question, play passes to the other team; a player on the second team can choose the same square or another square. The first team to get three **Xs** or **O**s in a row wins.

Questions of Tic-Tac-Toe:

- **Ananias:** What was Ananias position (that is, who was Ananias)? (He was the High priest. Vs 2)
- **Paul's nephew:** What did the commander do to Paul's nephew after the centurion presented the boy to him? (The commander took his hand, led him aside. Vs 19)
- **Sanhedrin:** When Paul stood before the Sanhedrin, what made the high priest angry? (After he ordered Paul to be slapped, Paul insulted him by calling him a “*corrupt hypocrite.*” Vs 3)

- **Rescue:** How did the Holy Spirit use the commander to rescue Paul? (The commander ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force. Vs 10)
- **Commander:** Where did the commander tell his men to take Paul when they rescued him from the Sanhedrin? (To take him back to the fortress. Vs 10)
- **Plans:** When a group of Jews laid out plans against Paul, what did they say they would NOT do until they had killed Paul? (A group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Vs 12)
- **Paul:** What verdict did Paul receive from the Pharisees? (Not guilty, “*We find nothing wrong with this man.*” Vs 9)
- **The Lord:** When the Lord stood near Paul during the night, what were His first words to Paul? (“*Take courage!*” Vs 11)
- **Plot:** How many men were involved in the plot to kill Paul? (There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. Vs 13)

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. Why did the Roman commander want the Jewish religious leaders to examine Paul? (Vs 22:30. The commander assumed the issue was about the Jewish religion and he wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.)
2. Why did Paul tell the High Priest that God would strike him? (Vs 3. Paul knew it was illegal to slap a man before proving he had committed a crime. Paul was saying, “*You sit here to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck.*”)
3. How did Paul respond when he realized he spoke harshly to the high priest? (Vs 5. Paul repented because he knew it was against God's law to speak evil of rules.)
4. What belief of Paul caused the strong argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees? (Paul declared himself to be a Pharisee, believing in the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees said they found no fault with Paul, but the Sadducees argued against that verdict because they did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits.)
5. Why did the commander order his soldier to put Paul in the barracks? (Vs 10. The commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart.)
6. How did God comfort and encourage Paul in the barracks? (Vs 11. God assured him that He had a plan; Paul must preach the Good News in Rome.)
7. What did the unbelieving Jews say they wouldn't do until Paul was killed? (Vs 12. They bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.)
8. What was their plan to kill Paul? (Vs 15. They told the religious leaders to ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again to examine his case more fully. Then they planned to kill him on his way to the council.)
9. Who stopped their evil plot? (Vs 16. Paul's nephew heard their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul.)
10. Why was it a big risk for Paul's nephew to go to the barracks? (He risked being seen by the conspirators; and, the Romans might not have believed him.)
11. What did the commander do to protect Paul? (Vs 24. The commander got Paul safely to Governor Felix in Caesarea. And he sent a letter to explain the situation.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul's Trial Before Felix

(Acts 24)

Introduction

[Teacher, using an image of a stop light, explain how our consciences are like stop lights.]

When we are about to do something that we shouldn't, our conscience is warning us to stop. If we stop, we avoid danger. If we ignore that warning over and over again, our conscience is no longer sensitive to doing what is right.

If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit is like a traffic light. He will warn you if you are about to go somewhere or do something you shouldn't. If you obey His warning, you will have a clear conscience. If you ignore Him, you will have a guilty conscience. You can have a clear conscience once again by confessing your sin.

If you continue to disobey the Holy Spirit you harden your heart to Him and can't hear Him as clearly as you can when you are walking in obedience to Him.

As we have followed the life of Paul in the Book of Acts, we have seen a believer who obeys the Holy Spirit and as a result has a clear conscience before God and man.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that you give us a conscience. You use it to direct our steps and help us to make good choices in life. I pray that we would not harden our hearts against You. We want to always live our lives before You in all good conscience. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. (Acts 24:16)

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)

Lesson

We left Paul last week in Caesarea. He was being held by Governor Felix who said that until those who were accusing Paul of committing a crime came, he would be guarded by soldiers in King Herod's palace.

After about five days, the high priest and some of the religious leaders came to make their charges against Paul before Felix.

Have you ever been in a courtroom? In a courtroom a judge is seated to hear the case that is brought before him. He listens to statements from both sides of the issue and then makes a decision of what to do.

In Paul's case, Governor Felix was the judge. He wanted to hear this case against Paul so he could decide what to do with him.

The high priest and the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem presented their charges against Paul.

Acts 24:5-8

*For we have found this man a plague, one who **stirs up riots** among all the Jews throughout the world and is a **ringleader of the sect** of the Nazarenes. (6) He even **tried to profane the temple**, but we seized him. (8) By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."*

What are their charges against Paul?

- Vs 5. He is a troublemaker who stirs up riots among the Jews all over the world.
- Vs 5. He is the ringleader of the Nazarenes sect.
- Vr 6. He tried to profane the Temple.

All the other Jews said they were in full agreement with these charges. But none of these charges were true!

Remember, it wasn't Paul who started the riots; it was the unbelieving Jews who stirred up the crowd while Paul was preaching the gospel!

And what's this about being the ringleader of the Nazarene sect? Paul was not preaching a different religion!

Jesus was from Nazareth; people called Him the "Nazarene". So, these people were referring to Christianity as the Nazarene sect, as if it was a new and different religion.

Paul's mission in life was to tell people that Jesus came as the fulfillment to Jewish scripture. Christianity was not a different religion from the Jewish religion; Jesus came as the fulfillment of all that the Jews had been waiting for, written in the scriptures from Genesis all the way through the Prophets.

Jesus was the promised One that the Jews had been waiting for since the beginning of time. He was the Christ, the Savior of the world who came to take away the penalty of their sins and give them eternal life with God in heaven.

After hearing the unbelieving Jews' side of the issue, Felix wanted to hear from Paul.

Acts 24:10-13

The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, "I know, sir, that you have been a judge of Jewish affairs for many years, so I gladly present my defense before you. (11) You can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago to worship at the Temple. (12) My accusers never found me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor stirring up a riot in any synagogue or on the streets of the city. (13) These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

Paul clearly states the facts. What did he say in his own defense?

- Vs 11. He arrived in Jerusalem twelve days ago to worship at the Temple.
- Vs 12. His accusers never found him arguing with anyone in the Temple.

- Vs 12. His accusers never found him stirring up a riot.

Paul assures Felix that he is a true Jew who worships the one and only God, just like the Jews do. But he admits to being a Jesus follower.

Acts 24:14-16

"But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a cult. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the prophets. (15) I have the same hope in God that these men have, that he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous. (16) Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

As a result of Paul's beliefs, he says that he makes every effort to always keep his conscience clear before God and man.

We talked in the beginning about what a conscience is and how God uses it to help us make good choices in life.

Ask: What do you need to do to keep a clear conscience before God and man? [Teacher, Help the students discover...]

- Obey God and confess sins. (1 John 1:9)
- Stay in God's Word so we'll know God's will.

Next, Paul tries to explain to Felix what happened.

Acts 24:17-18

"After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God. (18) My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting.

After Paul spoke, Felix ended the hearing.

Acts 24:22-23

At that point Felix, who was quite familiar with the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, "Wait until Lysias, the garrison commander, arrives. Then I will decide the case." (23) He ordered an officer to keep Paul in

custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

A few days after the trial, Felix and his wife brought Paul before them to hear more about his faith in Jesus.

Acts 24:24-25

A few days later Felix came back with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus. (25) As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the coming day of judgment, Felix became frightened. "Go away for now," he replied. "When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again."

When Felix heard Paul's message about righteousness, it frightened him and he sent Paul away.

Acts 24:26

He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

Felix was hoping that Paul would pay him to be released so he sent for Paul to come and talk to him often.

Ask: But do you think that Paul would have a clear conscience if he bribed Governor Felix to be set free?

The power of the Holy Spirit living in Paul enabled him to be obedient as a prisoner. He had the Lord Jesus' comfort and promise that he would testify about Him in Rome. Paul patiently waited, he wanted to do things God's way, even if that meant he had to sit in prison for a while.

Acts 24:27

After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.

Felix had an opportunity to do what was right. He could have released Paul right away because he had not committed a crime. But Felix was a weak man. He wanted to please the Jews, so he kept Paul in prison for two years.

Ask: Who else do you know that was falsely accused and punished for a crime they did not do? (Jesus was falsely accused by unbelieving Jews, too! He was punished for a crime He did not commit.)

Sometimes unfair things happen to us. But, if we trust that the Lord has a plan and a purpose for our lives, we learn to accept disappointments and unfairness's that happen in life.

Know that God has everything under control; even the bad stuff in life!

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, sometimes we are so anxious to get things done the way we want them. Help us to be patient and to wait for You. Your timing is always perfect. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Ask-It-Basket

Write the review questions on separate pieces of paper. Wad them up into balls and put them in a decorated basket. Ask each child to choose a question to answer.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. What crime did the unbelieving Jews accuse Paul of? (Vs 5-6. Being a troublemaker, stirring up riots, desecrating the Temple.)

2. Who did Paul say he worshiped? (Vs 14. The God of our fathers.)
3. What did Paul speak to Felix and his wife about? (Vs 24. Faith in Jesus Christ, righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.)
4. When Felix heard Paul speak about the judgment to come, how did he respond? (Vs 25. Felix became frightened.)
5. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison for two years? (Vs 27. Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people.)
6. How do you feel when you have a guilty conscience? (Weighed down, sick to your stomach, etc.)
7. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? (If you obey the Holy Spirit's warnings, you will have a clear conscience. If you ignore Him, you will have a guilty conscience. You can have a clear conscience once again by confessing your sin.)
8. Explain how our consciences are like stop lights.
9. What does it mean to have a hard heart? (If you continue to disobey the Holy Spirit you harden your heart to Him and can't hear Him as clearly as you can when you are walking in obedience to Him.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul's Trial Before Festus and Agrippa

(Acts 25-26)

Introduction

[Teacher, before class, write "THAT'S NOT ____ ____ ____ ____!" (Fair) on the board.]

As you came in this morning and saw this phrase on the board did you guess what word goes in the blanks? How many of you have ever said, "*That's not fair*"? What are some examples that cause us to say that? [Allow responses.]

As we have been studying the Book of Acts, can you think of any examples of people being treated unfairly? (Stephen, persecuted believers, imprisoned apostles, Paul being stoned, beaten, arrested, etc.)

Because believers have the Holy Spirit living inside their hearts, we have the power to respond with courage and perseverance when we are treated unfairly.

Let's review the last few lessons we've had about Paul's arrest in Jerusalem:

- What happened to Paul when he arrived in Jerusalem after his 3rd missionary journey? (He was arrested)
- How did he respond to his arrest? (He shared the Good News with the crowd.)
- How did God protect Paul when over 40 Jews made a vow to kill him? (The commander sent him to Caesarea with 470 soldiers to protect him)

The commander sent Paul to governor Felix. Felix didn't like it when Paul told him about Jesus, so he left Paul in prison. Besides, Felix was hoping Paul would pay him some money to let him go free. And after two whole years, Paul was still sitting in jail. That is a long time to be in prison for not doing anything wrong, isn't it?

Was Paul being treated fairly? (No!)

Ask: If you were Paul, how do you think you would respond to being unfairly imprisoned?

Let's look at our Bible verse for today and see how we should respond when unfair things happen to us.

Today we're going to find out how the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to be still and wait patiently for the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Father, only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we choose to be patient when we face unfair or difficult situations. But we thank You that You have given us Your Holy Spirit who can give us peace in our hearts and hope for the future. Give us good listening ears this morning so that we do not miss the important lessons you want to teach us. In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. (Psalms 37:7)

Lesson

Now there is a new governor that replaced Felix, named Festus.

Acts 25:1-2

Three days after Festus arrived in Caesarea to take over his new responsibilities, he left for Jerusalem, (2) where the leading priests and other Jewish leaders met with him and made their accusations against Paul.

Three days after he became governor, Festus traveled to Jerusalem. There the Jewish religious leaders met with him and begged him bring Paul to Jerusalem for trial.

Acts 25:3-5

They asked Festus as a favor to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (planning to ambush and kill him on the way). (4) But Festus replied that Paul was at

Caesarea and he himself would be returning there soon. (5) So he said, "Those of you in authority can return with me. If Paul has done anything wrong, you can make your accusations."

The unbelieving Jews still had Paul on their minds even after two years had passed. They were still plotting to kill Paul.

Festus told them if they wanted to accuse Paul of committing a crime, they needed to travel with him back to Caesarea where he would have another trial to prove whether Paul had done anything wrong.

Acts 25:6-7

About eight or ten days later Festus returned to Caesarea, and on the following day he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in. (7) When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn't prove.

Once again Paul is put on trial and once again, he is surrounded by unbelieving Jews who are determined to kill him. They surround him and accuse him of serious crimes, but they have no witnesses to prove that he actually did those things.

Acts 25:8

Paul denied the charges. "I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government," he said.

Paul knew that his conscience was clear before God and man. Festus was getting nowhere with this trial. He knew that Paul had not committed any crime that he could be punished for. But he wanted to please the unbelieving Jews and do them a favor, so he thought Paul might like to travel to Jerusalem and have another trial there.

Acts 25:9

Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, "Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?"

The Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom and the ability to remember God's words to him. God had given Paul specific details about where he would testify and share the Good News. [Flip back to chapter 23...]

Acts 23:11

*That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, **you must preach the Good News in Rome** as well."*

Paul knew God's plan for him was to go to Rome. So, Paul knew it was not God's will for him to go back to Jerusalem since he had already had a court hearing there two years earlier.

The Holy Spirit gave Paul the wisdom and boldness to tell Festus that he wanted to go to the highest authority. He asked to stand before Caesar, the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire who lived in Rome.

Acts 25:10-11

But Paul replied, "No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews. (11) If I have done something worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!"

Paul knew the Jews were planning to ambush and kill him if he went to Jerusalem for another trial. And since there had already been two trials that failed to convict him, it was his right as a Roman citizen to have his case stand trial before Caesar. This was like you and me demanding to have our case tried by the supreme court in the United States of America.

Festus talked with his advisors.

Acts 25:12

Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, "Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!"

It was God's plan all along for Paul to go to Rome. Nothing could stop God's plan!

A few days later, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice visited Festus. Festus talked with Agrippa about the situation with Paul.

Acts 25:14-15

During their stay of several days, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. "There is a prisoner here," he told him, "whose case was left for me by Felix. (15) When I was in Jerusalem, the leading priests and Jewish elders pressed charges against him and asked me to condemn him.

He explained that Paul had not been accused of any crimes that could be proven.

Acts 25:16-18

I pointed out to them that Roman law does not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and defend themselves. (17) "When his accusers came here for the trial, I didn't delay. I called the case the very next day and ordered Paul brought in. (18) But the accusations made against him weren't any of the crimes I expected.

Festus told Agrippa that the real issue the Jews had with Paul was that he was teaching the people about a man named Jesus.

Acts 25:19-20

Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive. (20) I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things, so I asked him whether he would be willing to stand trial on these charges in Jerusalem.

Festus told Agrippa that Paul didn't want to go to Jerusalem for a trial, but asked to go to Caesar. This made King Agrippa interested in what Paul had to say.

Acts 25:23-24

So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived at the auditorium with great pomp, accompanied by military officers and prominent men of the city. Festus ordered that Paul be brought in. (24) Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are here, this is the man whose death is demanded by all the Jews, both here and in Jerusalem.

Governor Festus said he needed advice from King Agrippa.

Acts 25:25-27

But in my opinion he has done nothing deserving death. However, since he appealed his case to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome. (26) "But what shall I write the emperor? For there is no clear charge against him. So I have brought him before all of you, and especially you, King Agrippa, so that after we examine him, I might have something to write. (27) For it makes no sense to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying the charges against him!"

Festus was required to write a letter to the emperor that would explain why he was sending Paul to him. Since there were no real charges against Paul, Festus didn't know what to write. So, he asked King Agrippa what to write in the letter; what crimes to list.

So far Paul has sat before Felix and Festus. Neither of these governors were able to convict Paul of any real crime. Now Paul has a hearing before King Agrippa.

The story of Paul before King Agrippa continues in chapter 26.

Rather than going through the whole chapter verse by verse, let me tell you about it and jump to the most important verse.

The King allowed Paul to speak freely before him. Paul began by telling his whole story, how he was brought up as a devout Jew, trained to be a Pharisee and like many Jews, was against the teachings of Jesus. In fact, he had been zealously hunting down Christians and bringing them to jail for punishment.

Then one day Paul was on his way to Damascus in Syria to hunt down and arrest Christians when suddenly he met the Lord Jesus.

Acts 26:12-15

“One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. (13) About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. (14) We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.’ (15) “Who are you, lord?’ I asked. “And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting.

Paul was thrown off his horse and blinded by a great light and then he heard a voice speaking to him.

Acts 26:16-18

*Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. (17) And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, **I am sending you to the Gentiles (18) to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.***

What did God want Paul to do? [Let the student discover the text.]

- Vs 17, **I am sending you to the Gentiles**—God wanted the message about Jesus to go to both the Jews and the Gentiles, or non-Jews. God wants everyone in the whole world to know Jesus.
- Vs 18, **open their eyes**—God wanted Paul to help people to know and understand the spiritual truth about Jesus.
- Vs 18, **turn from darkness to light**—God wanted people to turn from the power of Satan to God.
- Vs 18, **receive forgiveness for their sins**—
- Vs 18, **given a place among God’s people**—

God’s message to all people is the same whether they are Jews or Gentiles. His heart’s desire is that all people everywhere receive forgiveness for their sins so that they might have eternal life with Him in heaven.

How do we receive eternal life? By faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross. You must trust that when Jesus was crucified on the cross, that satisfied the Father’s angry wrath against your sin. Jesus is the answer to your sin problem. There is no other way to the Father.

So, here we leave Paul for this week. Next week he starts his journey to Rome. He has been treated unfairly. He had three phony trials; no charges could stick against him. Meanwhile, he sat in jail waiting to go to Rome which he knows is God’s will for his life.

If you and I were in Paul’s place we would probably be angry and frustrated. But Paul waits patiently on the Lord. He does not fret over his unfair treatment.

If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit can enable you to be patient and trust the Lord when you are facing difficulties. Whether it is being treated unfairly or waiting for God to answer your prayer about some other difficulty, you can be still and trust God during that time.

If you have not yet put your trust in Jesus, you won’t have the power of the Holy Spirit to help you when you face difficult situations.

God loves you and has sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins. He was buried and rose again the third day. Because Jesus died in your place you can have a right relationship with God by trusting in Jesus.

Once you believe in the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes and lives in your heart. With the Holy Spirit living in your heart, you will have the power to live a life that pleases God and He will give you peace when you are facing difficulties.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You have not left us to handle life alone in this world. You sent us the Holy Spirit who helps us, who guides us, and protects us. Help us to tune our spiritual ears into Your Voice so that we don't miss a single thing You want to tell us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Bowling

Spray-paint 10 2-liter-sized, plastic soda bottles. Set them up like bowling pins. Have each child take a turn, using a rubber ball. For a correct answer to a review question, a child gets an opportunity to bowl. The child or team gets points for every pin knocked down.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What is the name of the governor who replaced Felix? (Vs 1. Festus)
2. How long was Paul in prison while Felix was governor? (2 years)
3. Why did the Jews want Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem? (Vs 3. They planned an ambush; they wanted to kill him.)
4. Who gave Paul the ability to be patient and trust the Lord as he sat in prison? (The Holy Spirit.)
5. Why weren't the Jews able to prove Paul had committed the crimes they were accusing him of? (Vs 8. They had no witnesses to prove that he actually did those things.)

6. Why didn't Paul want to go to Jerusalem? (Paul knew that God told him He would testify in Rome.)
7. Why did Paul request to go to Caesar? (Vs 11. Paul knew the Jews were planning to ambush and kill him if he went to Jerusalem for another trial. Because Paul was a Roman citizen it was his right to have his case heard by Caesar himself. This was like demanding to go to the supreme court in the USA.)
8. What made King Agrippa interested in talking with Paul? (Vs 18-19. Agrippa was interested when he heard that the accusations against Paul had something to do with religion and a dead man named Jesus.)
9. Why did Festus need King Agrippa's advice? (Vs 25. Festus had to write a letter to Caesar to state the charges against Paul. Since there were no legitimate charges, Festus didn't know what to write.)

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul's Shipwreck

(Acts 27)

Introduction

Have you ever had to wait a long time for God to answer your prayers? Waiting is not always easy. How long has Paul been waiting in jail to go to Rome? (2 years.) How was Paul able to remain faithful to Jesus?

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have faith to believe the words of Jesus. Remember, Jesus Himself came to Paul while he was in the jail in Caesarea. [Flip back to chapter 23.]

Acts 23:11

*That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, **you must preach the Good News in Rome** as well."*

God comforted Paul and told him he would go to Rome and testify about Jesus, so Paul hung onto that promise, even though it might have seemed impossible.

In today's lesson we learn that Paul takes a very dangerous journey on a ship across an angry sea. It was getting towards winter and the winds blew strong and the waves were rough. We will learn that when we are in danger, God will help us, if we ask Him.

Let's see how God keeps His hand upon Paul and gives him protection and comfort.

Opening Prayer

Father, Help us to trust that You are always with us and that You have a plan and purpose for our lives and that You are not going to let anything stop Your plans for us until we have completed the mission You have for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[Teacher, as you teach this lesson, trace the course of this voyage on a Bible map.]

Memory Verse

For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear Him. (Psalms 34:7 NLT)

Lesson

Paul had been in jail for two whole years waiting for God to accomplish His plan. After having several trials—before the Jewish religious leaders, the Roman governor Felix, and the Roman governor Festus—and having no real charges stick against him, Paul demanded that governor Festus let him stand trial before Caesar in Rome.

Chapter 27 tells us about the voyage Paul took to get there.

Acts 27:1

*When the time came, we set sail for **Italy**. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment.*

A Roman officer named Julius was put in charge of Paul and the other prisoners and he was very kind.

Acts 27:3

*The next day when we docked at **Sidon**, Julius was very kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends so they could provide for his needs.*

Even though Paul was a prisoner, when the ship reached Sidon [show on map], Julius allowed Paul to go ashore and spend time with his friends.

When they were ready to set sail again, Paul and the others traveling with him returned to the ship.

Acts 27:4

*Putting out to sea from there, we encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so we sailed north of **Cyprus** between the island and the mainland.*

They were sailing against the winds so they had several days of slow sailing and great difficulty as they struggle along the coastline.

Acts 27:8

*We struggled along the coast with great difficulty and finally arrived at **Fair Havens**, near the town of **Lasea**.*

Paul warned Julius not to travel on until winter was past.

Acts 27:9-11

We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel because it was so late in the fall, and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it. (10) "Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well." (11) But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.

Julius did not listen to Paul's warning. When they set sail, the winds were light, so they thought they were OK, but as they sailed on, things got exciting.

Acts 27:13-15

When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete. (14) But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea. (15) The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale.

The wind blew the waves so high they looked like mountains. It was blowing so hard that the captain could not turn the ship back. They were caught in the middle of a terrible storm. The waves came crashing down onto the ship. The sailors had to work hard to keep the ship from filling with water. They thought the ship was going to break apart.

To lighten the load, they began to throw everything overboard.

Acts 27:18-20

*The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. (19) The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard. (20) The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last **all hope was gone**.*

It was a very dangerous situation. Everyone on the ship was terrified and had given up hope that they would survive this terrible storm.

Ask: How would you feel about being on this ship in this storm?

Paul seems to be the only one that had his mind at rest.

Ask: How was it that Paul had peace in the middle of this storm? (The Holy Spirit gave him comfort and courage.)

At this point, Paul takes charge of the situation. He stood up in front of all the men on the ship and spoke in a loud voice so everyone could hear him over the noise of the storm.

Acts 27:21-22

No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. (22) But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down.

Paul encouraged everyone not to be afraid.

Acts 27:23-26

*For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, (24) and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for **you will surely stand trial before Caesar!** What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' (25) So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. (26) But we will be shipwrecked on an island."*

Paul could have allowed fear to paralyze him. But Paul believed God and spoke words of encouragement to those all around him who were terrified.

Acts 27:27-29

About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria, the sailors sensed land was near. (28) They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep. (29) At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight. [Note: 1 fathom = 6 feet]

The sailors weren't thinking of the other passengers on the ship; they only wanted to save their own lives.

Acts 27:30

Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship.

The sailors were afraid. They thought the ship was going to crash into the rocks and they were all going to die. So, they tried to sneak off the boat. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom to know that they were planning to escape so he spoke up and the soldiers listened to him.

Acts 27:31-32

But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard." (32) So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

At this point, it had been 14 days since anyone had anything to eat. They were weak and exhausted, so Paul encouraged everyone to eat.

Acts 27:33-38

*Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. (34) "Please eat something now for your own good. For **not a hair of your heads will perish.**" (35) Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God*

before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. (36) Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— (37) all 276 of us who were on board. (38) After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

Paul assured everyone that not a single one of them would die. So everyone relaxed and had something to eat. After they ate as much as they wanted, they threw the rest of the grain overboard.

Acts 27:39-40

When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay with a beach and wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground. (40) So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore.

Everyone must have thought that they were out of danger. But suddenly the ship jerked to a stop.

Acts 27:41

But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.

Suddenly everything got crazy. The ship was sinking and people were panicking, especially the guards. If any of the prisoners escaped, the soldier guarding them would be put to death.

Acts 27:42-44

*The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape. (43) But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn't let them carry out their plan. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land. (44) The others held on to planks or debris from the broken ship. So **everyone escaped safely to shore.***

Once again, we see God's kindness and protection of Paul. Julius wanted to save Paul so he told the soldiers not to kill any of the

prisoners. Everyone made it to the beach alive. Not one person on the ship died; everyone escaped safely to shore.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have courage and to trust God in a very frightening situation. Paul's faith in God enabled him to encourage the other passengers on the ship during this very scary time.

God had a plan and purpose for Paul's life and no difficulty was going to stop God's purpose for Paul. And, as God's purpose for Paul's life was being fulfilled, many other lives were blessed and touched by God, as well.

God has a plan and purpose for each one of us. If you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will enable you to fulfill that purpose in your life. God wants your faith to grow so you can be a strong witness to share Jesus with others. We will face difficulties at times, but God never leaves us in those difficulties. The Holy Spirit will help you be strong and courageous and to encourage others to trust in God, too.

Maybe you are not a believer yet. Maybe you are like many of the passengers on the ship sailing to Rome. You may be going through a very difficult time in your life and you are scared. You don't have to go through this difficult time alone. God sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins so you can have a right relationship with God.

When you believe in Jesus you are adopted into God's family and will never be alone because the Holy Spirit will live inside your heart. The Holy Spirit will give you the strength and courage you need as you face different circumstances in your day-to-day life. Your courage will encourage others to have faith, too.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You give us courage in difficult situations. When we are encouraged and strengthened in our spirits, help us to encourage others around us to have faith in You and to trust You in every circumstance in life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Basket Ball

For every right answer, the child gets three shots at basketball. Each basket is worth 200 points. [You can use a trash can and paper wadded up.]

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. Do you think Paul's life as a Christian was easy or hard? Why? (Encourage their answers.)
2. How do you think Paul was able to keep serving God despite the difficulties? (The Holy Spirit gave him power to continue to follow God.)
3. Where was Paul sailing to? (Vs 1. Rome)
4. Who was the centurion in charge of Paul? (Vs 1. A Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment.)
5. How did God show love and kindness to Paul on this trip? (Vs 2. God allowed Paul's friends to travel with him (Luke, Aristarchus). Vs 3. Julius let him spend time with friends. Vs 43. Spared his life when soldiers wanted to kill prisoners.)
6. What advice did Paul give Julius? And did Julius follow Paul's advice? (Vs 10. Stay where they were for the winter. Vs 11. No)
7. Why did the sailors begin to throw the cargo overboard? (Vs 18. To lighten the load.)

8. How did Paul encourage the people on the ship when it was very frightening and everyone had given up hope of being saved? (Vs 22-24. He shared God's message of promise with them.)
9. What did the sailors try to do because they were so afraid for their lives? (Vs 30. They tried to sneak off the ship in lifeboats.)
10. How did the soldiers stop the sailors from sneaking off the ship? (Vs 32. The soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.)
11. At about day 14 of this violent storm, what did Paul urge everyone to do? (Vs 33. Paul urged everyone to eat.)
12. How many people were traveling on the ship? (Vs 37. 276)
13. Why did the soldiers want to kill the prisoners? (Vs 42. So they wouldn't escape. They knew the penalty for letting a prisoner escape was death!)
14. What did the commanding officer, Julius, order everyone to do? (Vs 43. Jump overboard and make for land.)
15. How did God show these men on the ship that His promises could be trusted? (Vs 44. Not one person died in the shipwreck.)
16. Who are some people you could encourage? What could you tell them about God to encourage them to trust Him today?

[For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

Paul Arrives in Rome at Last

(Acts 28)

Introduction

Do you ever get irritated with people when they interrupt what you are doing? Maybe it's a brother or a sister and here you are engrossed in playing a video game or watching something on TV and they come in and start to talk and want to play.

I know when someone gets in my way or disrupts what I am doing, I get pretty bothered by it. But, if you are a follower of Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit living in your heart and He gives you the power to turn the interruption into a blessing. You can choose to trust that God planned that interruption for His purpose. Perhaps God wants to use you to bless that other person in some way?

This is our last lesson in the book of Acts. We've been learning about the apostle Paul and all the hardships and difficulties that he faced as he tried to accomplish what he knew God had asked him to do.

Let's briefly recap the last few years of Paul's his life.

- Where had he been for the last 2 years? (Imprisoned in Caesarea.)
- Where did God promise Paul, he would go to share the Gospel? (Rome)
- What happened as Paul set sail to Rome? (A terrible storm came and the shipwrecked.)
- How would you feel if you were living Paul's life? How would you react to his circumstances? What would be a very natural reaction to so much difficulty? (Quit)
- How was Paul able to persevere no matter what circumstance he faced?

The Holy Spirit gave Paul courage and power to persevere and enabled him to see each situation that he faced as an opportunity to share the Good News with others.

As we continue our journey with Paul to Rome, let's keep our eyes open for how he used the situation to point others to Jesus rather than throw a pity party and quit.

Opening Prayer

Father, we pray that You would give us the ability to see each and every situation we are in as an opportunity to share with others the goodness and plan of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. (13) For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. (Philippians 1:12-13)

Lesson

In our last lesson, we left Paul and the other passengers as they were frantically swimming with pieces of a broken and sinking ship. All of the passengers swam safely to the shore of an island. They survived a terrible shipwreck and were standing cold and wet on the shore of an island.

Acts 28:1

Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta.

The people living on the island must have heard the noise and cries of the people from the shipwreck. The islanders were walking in the direction of the survivors. A thought that must have crossed Paul and the rest of the survivors' minds was: "Were these people friends or enemies? Did they survive a shipwreck to be killed on an island of complete strangers?"

Ask: Knowing what you already know about Paul do you think he was afraid that he was going to be killed on this island? (Why or why not?)

Acts 28:2

The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

The people of Malta welcomed everyone to their island. Immediately they began to start a fire so the survivors could get warm. Paul helped by gathering sticks to help keep the fire burning.

Acts 28:3

As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand.

As Paul threw his sticks onto the fire a poisonous snake slithered out of the sticks to avoid the burning hot flame and clamped his fangs right on the hand of Paul.

The natives of the island stood there with their eyes wide open.

Acts 28:4

The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live."

The people of Malta did not worship the One True God; they worshipped idols and they thought that because this snake had bitten Paul, he must have been a sinful man. They thought, "That man should have died at sea, but since he didn't, the gods must have sent this poisonous snake to kill him."

But we all know that God had a plan for Paul, and it wasn't to die on this beach from a snake bite! God did not allow Paul to be harmed by the poisonous snake.

Acts 28:5-6

*But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. (6) The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and **decided he was a god.***

The natives stood there waiting to see Paul fall to the ground and start writhing in pain and gasping for breath. But that's not what they saw. Paul went on warming himself by the fire. So then they decided Paul must be a god!

The chief official of the island lived near the beach. He invited Paul and his friends to stay with him.

Acts 28:7

Near the shore where we landed was an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and treated us kindly for three days.

While they were at Publius' house, his father became very ill. So, Paul went into his room.

Acts 28:8

As it happened, Publius's father was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him.

God healed Publius' father and when the news got around the island that Paul had healed him, many people who were sick came to Paul.

Acts 28:9-10

Then all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. (10) As a result we were showered with honors, and when the time came to sail, people supplied us with everything we would need for the trip.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to use this opportunity to point the people of Malta to Jesus. They were blessed and treated Paul kindly and supplied his needs when they left.

Acts 28:11-12

It was three months after the shipwreck that we set sail on another ship that had wintered at the island—an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods as its figurehead. (12) Our first stop was Syracuse, where we stayed three days.

After staying on Malta for three months, they set sail for the city of Rome. When Paul arrived in Rome, many believers came out to welcome him.

Acts 28:15

The brothers and sisters in Rome had heard we were coming, and they came to meet us at the Forum on the Appian Way. Others joined us at The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God.

This must have greatly encouraged Paul.

Acts 28:16

When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

Now before you think that Paul had it easy, remember, he was not living in luxury. He was not free to come and go as he pleased. This was called “house arrest”. He was kept in a rented house at his own expense. While it was better than being in a dungeon, he was kept chained to a Roman soldier who was to keep guard over him.

He did have certain privileges, however. He was able to receive visitors, continue to preach, and write letters [Teacher, show the students their Table of Contents and point out which letters Paul wrote.]

Three days after he got there, Paul called the local Jewish religious leaders to meet with him. Let’s read what Paul said to them.

Acts 28:23-24

So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul’s lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. (24) Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe.

All these years the Jewish people had been waiting for God to send the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Now they had heard the truth that God had sent Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise.

Some people believed what Paul was saying but others did not believe. They began to argue among themselves back and forth.

The Holy Spirit allowed Paul to preach the gospel for the next two years.

Acts 28:30-31

For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, (31) boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

Every time someone came to visit him, he freely taught them the Good News. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to use whatever situation he was in to point others to Jesus.

Think about it. Paul was under “house arrest”. He was unjustly imprisoned, not knowing what his future held for him, and yet, instead of being angry or wringing his hands in worry, he took every opportunity he had to preach the Good News to people. His heart’s desire was that everyone might understand who God is and what His plan and purpose was for each of us!

He didn’t waste any time feeling sorry for himself. He wasn’t bitter, angry or resentful towards God or others who were responsible for his

imprisonment. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to trust God and walk with Him no matter what his circumstances were.

As a result of Paul's willingness to use each opportunity that God gave him to point others to Jesus many people believed in Jesus.

Paul lived over 2,000 years ago. I don't think we could ever know until we get to heaven how many people have become believers because Paul was obedient to the job God had given him to do. He allowed the Holy Spirit to empower him to do whatever God asked him to do. Even as we read about Paul's life, the Holy Spirit can use his example to cause people to believe in the Lord Jesus.

Today believers have the same exciting privilege and responsibility to obey God and do what He tells us to do. Each of us has been placed in our situations so we can share the Good News about Jesus with those we come in contact with. The Holy Spirit will empower believers to do whatever God asks him/her to do.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, what a great example Paul was to us. He used every opportunity he had to share the gospel with others. Help us to remember that every situation we find ourselves in is part of Your plan for our lives. We ask you to forgive us when we are impatient and bothered by people who interrupt us. Help us to see those as "God moments" when we can share how good You are. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Bingo —

Make Bingo cards using words from the book of Acts. Enter words at random into the spaces to create unique Bingo cards for each player.

Copy each card onto a different colored card stock and laminate them for future use. Call out the words, one-by-one. If a child has that word, he places a marker over it. The first child to get a row of markers in any direction is the winner. [Beans make great markers.]

Possible words to use:

Antioch, Apostles, Barnabas, Baptism, Christians, Church, Damascus, Faith, Gentiles, Good News, Holy Spirit, James, Jerusalem, Jesus, Jewish Religious Leaders, Journey, Lydia, Paul, Peter, Praying, Preach, Prophet, Saul, Synagogue.

[See example Bingo Card below the following questions.]

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What is the name of the Island the survivors landed on? (Vs 1. Malta.)
2. How did the people of Malta treat the survivors? (Vs 2. Kindly.)
3. Why did the people think Paul was a murderer? (Vs 5. Paul didn't die from the snake bite.)
4. How did God use Paul on the island of Malta to help others learn about God? (Vs 8. Paul healed Publius.)
5. When Paul was in Rome what were his living conditions like? (Vs 16. He was permitted to have his own private lodging.)
6. What happened when Paul taught the Jews about the Scriptures and how Jesus is the Savior? (Vs 24. Some believed; some didn't.)
7. How long did Paul teach anyone who visited his house about Jesus? (Vs 30. Two years.)
8. The people on Malta were very kind to Paul. How can you show kindness to someone this week?

- 9. The believers who met Paul when he arrived in Rome encouraged him. How can you encourage another believer this week?
- 10. For believers: What is hindering you from boldly sharing the Gospel with others?
- 11. For unbelievers: Have you heard the Good News and have chosen not to believe? Today you can be saved. Each day you put off believing that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and rose again you are closing your heart and mind to the Truth making it harder for you to be saved.

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[For more expositional lessons for children, visit <https://www.FreeChildrensMinistryLessons.com>]

