

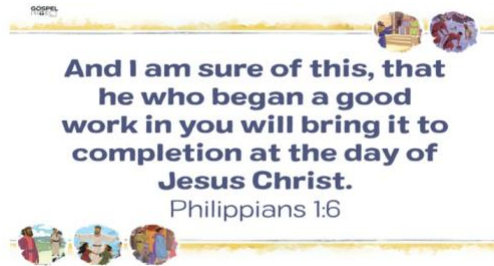
ALL THINGS NEW: FINISHING STRONG

(The Gospel Project Volume 11 Unit 35: Customized from the Preschool, Younger, and Older Leader Guides)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION FOR THIS UNIT:

What will happen for all Christians in the future? One day all Christians will see Jesus in His glory and live with Him forever.

KEY PASSAGE FOR THIS UNIT:



TODAY'S LESSON: Paul Before Rulers

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

Festus succeeded Felix as governor. The Jews presented their accusations against Paul and asked Festus to bring him to Jerusalem. They hoped to ambush Paul as he traveled and kill him. But Festus invited Paul's accusers to make their case in Caesarea. When Festus heard Paul's case, he asked if Paul wanted to be tried in Jerusalem. Paul, knowing his rights as a Roman citizen, appealed to be heard by Caesar.

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

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

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

PREPARING YOUR CHILDREN FOR GOD'S WORD:

Make sure that your children have a Bible with them even if they are too young to read.

Have your kids sing along with the worship songs that are posted for this week.

THE BIBLE STORY:
(Video teaching online)
Acts 24–26

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

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

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

Paul stood before Festus. "I haven't done anything wrong," Paul explained again. "I want to see Caesar!" Caesar was the emperor of Rome, and as a Roman citizen, **Paul had the right to take his case to him. Festus agreed.**

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

"You are out of your mind!" Festus said.

Paul said, "I am speaking the truth. I wish you—and everyone who is listening—might believe in Jesus."

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

APPLICATION:

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem, but had been moved to Caesarea for safety. Felix, the governor, met with Paul multiple times over two years to speak with him. Being in prison for years may sound rough, but God was working through Paul even while he was captured. Paul had the opportunity to share the gospel with the governor for two whole years!

When Festus—the next governor—took over Paul asked to be heard by Caesar. Remember, when Paul was first arrested in Jerusalem, God had told Paul that He wanted Paul to share the gospel in Rome. Now, God was giving Paul the opportunity to use his arrest to travel there! But that also meant Paul had to stay a prisoner even longer.

Paul was willing to do hard things to share the gospel. He didn't care about his own comfort or safety as much as he cared about obeying God to preach the gospel to everyone. Part of Paul's courage came from his understanding of the future God has promised believers. ***What will happen for all Christians in the future? One day, all Christians will see Jesus in His glory and live with Him forever.***

God can use difficult circumstances in our lives to continue His plan, too. There will be times in your life when you face scary, sad, or difficult situations. In those moments, you can take comfort knowing that God is at work. God always keeps His promises.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

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

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

2-5 Year Olds:

Who told rulers about Jesus? (**Paul told rulers about Jesus.**)

Where was Paul kept? (*in prison*)

How long did Felix keep Paul in prison? (*two years*)

What had Paul done wrong? (*nothing*)

Did Paul stop telling people about Jesus? (*no*)

What will happen for all Christians in the future? One day, all Christians will see Jesus in His glory and live with Him forever.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade:

Who had planned to kill Paul? (*the Jews, Acts 23:15*)

How often did Paul and Felix, the governor, meet to talk about faith? (*many times for two years, Acts 24:27*)

Who did Paul tell Festus he wanted to see? (*Caesar, the emperor of Rome; Acts 25:10*)

How was prison a blessing from God for Paul? *Guide your kids to think about what Paul's enemies wanted to do to him. Remind your kids that as long as Paul was being held by the Romans, the Jewish religious leaders who hated him could not achieve their goal of killing Paul.*

Why was Paul willing to stay in prison when he hadn't broken the law? *Direct your kids to think about Paul's understanding of God's promises. Paul knew that God wanted him to go to Rome to share the gospel, and asking to speak with Caesar is one way Paul could do so. Paul also knew that the rewards of obeying God are worth giving up anything the world can offer us, such as wealth, comfort, or power.*

Have you done difficult things to share the gospel? *Help your kids think critically about their lives. Encourage any of your kids who admit they haven't done anything difficult to share the gospel, and pray over them that God will give them courage and opportunities to share.*

Say • **Paul was willing to do hard things to share the gospel.** Paul knew that Jesus alone had the power to save people from sin. Paul trusted God's plan.

3rd-5th Grade:

How do you think Paul felt when he was a prisoner? *Guide your kids to recall that Paul was treated unfairly and falsely accused. However, his friends were allowed to visit him in prison, and he was able to speak with governors. Prompt them to share how they might have felt if they were Paul.*

(Option: read Eph. 6:19-20.)

If you could talk to any leader in the world, who would you want to talk to? What would you say? *Remind your kids that Paul met with Roman rulers. He talked to Felix the governor, Festus the governor, King Agrippa, and Queen Bernice. Paul told them about Jesus.*

(Option: read Prov. 21:1.)

What are you willing to do to share the gospel? Is there anything you aren't willing to do? *Encourage your kids to share and explain their answers. Acknowledge any fear or hesitation about sharing the gospel, and reassure your kids that they can ask the Holy Spirit for help and boldness in telling others about Jesus.*

(Option: read 2 Cor. 3:12.)

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask your kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with your kids.

God rules. Explain to your kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell your kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with your kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell your kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

LIFEWAY KIDS APP:

You can download the LifeWay Kids app to find more activities that will go along with the lessons each week. Look for The Gospel Project and click on Volume 11 (the lite version is free). Then click on Unit 35 and you will see all of the lessons in that unit. Click on this week's Bible story for more activities.