

Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot



Scripture Reference: [Acts 22:30-23:35](#)

Suggested Theme: God believes young people can do great things through Him. Don't wait until you get "older" to serve God.

Memory Verse: "You are young, but do not let anyone treat you as if you were not important. Be an example to show the believers how they should live. Show them with your words, with the way you live, with your love, with your faith, and with your pure life." [1 Timothy 4:12, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Paul was under arrest in Jerusalem because of false accusations by the Jews. Paul's Roman citizenship demanded a fair hearing, so the Roman commander in charge set up a meeting with Jewish priests and the Sanhedrin. This meeting ended in chaos, with Paul back in protective custody. Paul's young nephew overheard some of the Jews plotting to kill Paul, so Paul asked him to tell the commander. The commander had no choice but to arrange a large military escort to take Paul to Caesarea, the nearest headquarters of Roman rule. One night, amidst all these events, Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to have courage because he would be going to Rome to testify about his faith.

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

Background Study:

There was high tension among the Jews in Jerusalem. Some Jews had falsely accused Paul of bringing a Gentile into the Jewish temple and thereby defiling it. Paul had not done this, but an angry mob beat him. The riot that erupted drew the attention of the Roman commander, and Paul was taken into custody ([Acts 21:27-22:29](#)).

The Roman commander was still trying to understand how Paul had become the centre of such chaos. Before Paul's arrest, the commander had received the message that this affected the whole city of Jerusalem ([Acts 21:31](#)). Keeping order in the city was part of the commander's job, so this was no small matter.

Paul was a Roman citizen, so he had the right to hear the case made by his accusers. The commander recognised that the Jewish Sanhedrin led the people in matters of Jewish customs and laws. This would have been the reason why he ordered the Sanhedrin to meet.

The meeting began badly. As soon as Paul mentioned that his conscience was clear, the high priest ordered that he be hit on his mouth. Perhaps the high priest was angered because his own conscience was not clear.

The Roman commander would not have understood Jewish laws and customs, but Paul certainly did. He knew how to direct the attention away from himself. Paul understood that Pharisees and Sadducees were

groups within the Jewish leadership who disagreed on many things, including what happened to people after death.

Paul was a second-generation Pharisee. He shouted to the group that he was on trial because he was a Pharisee and hoped that people would rise again after death.

Pharisees began taking Paul's side, and Sadducees just became angrier. What had started as a meeting became an argument. Soon, the argument escalated into a fight, and the commander had soldiers take Paul to the barracks to be saved from impending death.

What happened the next night showed clearly that God had plans for Paul. Paul had been led to Jerusalem by the Spirit, and now Jesus appeared before him to give comfort and let him know what would happen soon.

“The next night the Lord came and stood by Paul. He said, ‘Be brave! You have told people in Jerusalem about me. You must do the same in Rome also.’” [Acts 23:11, ICB](#)

At first glance, being in custody among Roman soldiers was bad. But these soldiers were obligated to protect Paul. God used the power of the Roman military to keep Paul safe for His future purpose.

Paul was under custody, but the Jews were still very angry. Some of them even plotted to kill Paul. It was Paul's young nephew who brought this to the attention of the Roman commander. [Acts 23:12-22](#)

This mention of a nephew naturally implies that Paul had at least one brother or sister. Most translations of this passage say it was the son of Paul's sister. Paul had lived in Jerusalem as a young man and studied under the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel. Perhaps his family had moved to Jerusalem from their home region of Cilicia then. We do not know the details, but Paul had at least one relative in the city.

Although Paul's nephew was young, the commander took his report seriously. He had investigated the allegations, but he had never been able to understand why the Jews were so angry with Paul. It was now time to send the prisoner on to a higher court.

The commander had Paul transported to Caesarea under heavy guard. They left that very night. Learn more about what happened in Caesarea in the Bible lesson: [Paul's Trial](#).

God used one act by a young person to save Paul's life and continue his work. It may surprise the children to know that if this young man had not spoken up and Paul had been killed, Paul would not have gone on to write many of the books of the New Testament. Young people really can make a difference.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Share an account of a story where a child was a hero. Perhaps there is something in your own experience, or you can find a newspaper account. There have been many instances where children rang for an ambulance when someone was choking or passed out. “In today's story, we are going to read about a young man who saved someone's life.”

The Story:

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem because some angry Jews told lies about him. They said he had been disrespectful in the Jewish temple by bringing a Gentile into the Temple area where only Jews were allowed to go.

However, Paul was a Roman citizen and could not be imprisoned without a reason. The Roman commander called a meeting of all the Jewish leaders to listen to their accusations. This group of Jewish leaders was called the “Sanhedrin.”

When Paul stood in front of the Sanhedrin, he told them he had done nothing wrong. This made the leader of the Sanhedrin very angry. He even told some of the men to hit Paul. Paul knew that this was against the Sanhedrin's own rules.

Paul continued to tell them that he had not done anything wrong. Then Paul said that he was a Pharisee and his father had been a Pharisee. Pharisees were very strict in their beliefs. Some of the Jews in the Sanhedrin were Pharisees, so they began to take Paul's side. But some of the Jews in the Sanhedrin were "Sadducees." Sadducees did not believe like the Pharisees. The Sadducees started getting angry at the Pharisees, and soon everyone was arguing.

The Roman commander had called this meeting to find out why the Jews were angry with Paul. But now everyone was getting more and more angry. Finally, he decided to remove Paul from this dangerous place and return him to the soldier's sleeping quarters.

The next night, something very unexpected happened to Paul. Jesus Christ stood beside Paul's bed and said to him, "Be brave! You have told people about me in Jerusalem; you will also tell people about me in Rome."

Rome? Paul could hardly believe it. Rome was very far away! Paul felt better. Now, he knew God would care for him and keep him safe until he got to Rome.

Meanwhile, some of the Jews began to make a plan to kill Paul. They decided to trick the Roman guard into bringing Paul back to the Sanhedrin. They would kill Paul on the way.

These men did not know that a young man nearby could hear everything they were saying. This young man was Paul's nephew.

Paul's nephew ran to where Paul was being held prisoner and told Paul all about the plot. Paul told his nephew to tell the Roman commander, so he did. The commander told the boy to keep this a secret because he planned to keep Paul safe. The boy kept the secret.

During the night, the commander ordered soldiers to secretly take Paul away to the city of Caesarea, where the governor lived. Walking soldiers and soldiers on horses guarded Paul very carefully. They gave Paul a horse to ride.

The Roman commander sent a special letter to the governor telling him everything that happened. He said that he would tell the Jews from Jerusalem that they would have to travel to Caesarea and talk to the governor if they wanted to accuse Paul.

Now Paul was kept in custody in Caesarea awaiting a trial. Paul must have remembered what Jesus had said, so he tried to be brave.

Sometimes young people think that what they do is not important, but Paul's nephew was a young person, and he saved Paul's life!

Just think about this: If this young man had not spoken up and Paul had been killed, Paul would not have gone on to write many of the books of the New Testament.

God believes young people can do great and important things for Him. In fact, He loves when young people want to serve Him and help others! God worked through Paul's nephew to help Paul. What can God do through you and I? How could we work with God to help others?

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#), or [click here for the printable illustrations](#).

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Or use the following video.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions](#).

Review:

1. What is the Sanhedrin? (A group of Jewish leaders)
2. Who appeared to Paul at night? (Jesus)
3. Where did Jesus tell Paul that he would share his faith? (In Rome)
4. When some Jews were making a plan to try to kill Paul, who overheard them? (Paul's nephew, the son of Paul's sister)
5. What did Paul's nephew do when he overheard the Jews planning to kill his Uncle Paul? (He went and told Paul, and then Paul had him tell the Roman commander)
6. What did the Romans do with Paul when they heard about the secret plan? (They took him secretly at night to another city called Caesarea)
7. What do you think Paul learned from this experience? What do you think Paul's nephew learned?
8. What does this story show you about people?
9. What does this story show you about Jesus?

Reflection:

1. Imagine you overhear a plot about people trying to kill your uncle. What would you do next?
2. How do you think Paul's nephew felt when he went to tell Paul and then the Roman commander about the plot to kill his Uncle Paul?
3. Does it surprise you that Paul had a sister and a nephew?
4. How do you think Paul felt about his nephew? Was he proud of him? Why?
5. Young people (like you) can do some amazing things that are very important. Is there something important you would like to do?
6. What problems are at your school, neighbourhood, family or church? Is there a way you'd like to help with these problems?
7. Do you know any stories of children or young people making a difference in people's lives or the world?
8. Suggestion: Pray with the children about their desires to help with certain problems or needs. If some of the children's ideas are plausible, see what your church could do to help make these ideas happen.
9. What part of this story was most interesting to you?
10. What question do you have for God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [I Can Be a Missionary Song](#)
- [I'm in the Lord's Army Song](#)
- [God is Listening When We Pray \(Song\) English/Cebuano](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- [Use finger puppets to tell the story.](#)
- Guide the children in listing any children they can think of in the bible [Miriam and Moses, Joseph, the slave of Naaman's wife, Jesus, and Rhoda (the slave girl in Acts 12)] and discuss what they did.
- List things children and young adults can do today to serve God.
- Think of a project the children can do to help the church in some way (Visit someone, clean part of the church building gardens, make food baskets to help someone in need, etc.)
- To review, you or the children can draw a large outline of Paul on a whiteboard or piece of paper (even drawing with a stick in the sand works fine if you are outside). Then, after you have taught the lesson, ask the children to think about what they have just learned from the Bible. Have them write descriptive words and/or draw pictures inside and around the outlined illustration of Paul. When you see what the children are writing or drawing, you may be surprised or encouraged by what insights they have picked up from the story. This is also a good opportunity to correct or add to anything you might not have covered as well as you could have when you were teaching.



If you prefer, you can [download and print the illustration of Paul provided here](#) and then have the children write and draw on it for the review.

- Alternatively, if you are teaching a series of lessons about Paul, you might draw an outline of him on a large poster or paper and then add descriptive words about him each time you study a new lesson.

- [Click here for the 16 lessons about the Life of Paul grouped together.](#)

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Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Guide children in drawing a picture of themselves surrounded by others (family members, friends at school, sports team, etc.) The children could then add speech bubbles or thought clouds of godly things they might say or think to interact with this group.
- Make a relief map of Paul’s Journeys featuring the place in today’s story. If you are studying Paul’s journeys over a few lessons, you could add more details to the map each time you learn about another stop on the journey. Instructions on how to make a relief map at <https://www.weirdunsocializedhomeschoolers.com/step-by-step-to-making-salt-dough-map/>

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Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).

- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

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Other Online Resources:

- [List of practical ways children can serve God \(sonbeamz.com\)](#)
- [Review: Create a “passport” that covers Paul’s life. Good visual ideas and activities. It could be split up to go with several lessons or taught all together as a review of previous lessons concerning Paul \(kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)

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Date

