

# Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot

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



**Suggested Emphasis:** Young people can do great things for God (don't wait until you get "older" to serve God).

**Memory Verse:** "Even small children are known by their actions." Proverbs 20:11a, NIV



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## 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 and 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 city of Caesarea, the nearest headquarters of Roman rule. One night, amidst all of these events, Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to have courage because he would be going all the way to Rome to testify about his faith.

## Background Study:

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

In the years since he [Paul had become a Christian](#) he had devoted his life to the Gospel. Paul was an educated Jew but never limited himself to just teaching other Jews about Christ. He taught both Jews and Gentiles. Through a relationship with the Antioch church he had conducted three major missionary journeys ([1st](#), [2nd](#), [3rd](#)) and had taken the good news of Jesus throughout Asia Minor and over to Macedonia and Achaia. As his third missionary trip concluded [Paul was prompted by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem](#). He was warned he would find persecution and arrest there but Paul was determined to be led by the Spirit.

There was high tension among the Jews in Jerusalem. Many had heard of what Paul had been doing and there was much debate. Israel had been the chosen people of God since the time of Abraham. Many Jews had accepted Jesus as the Messiah but others had not. Even those that had accepted the Messiah were questioning if Gentiles could become a Christian without converting to Judaism first.

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](#)).

In today's lesson we find the Roman commander trying to find the truth of how Paul became the centre of such chaos. Before Paul's arrest the commander had received the message that *"the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar"* [Acts 21:31](#).

Keeping order in the city was part of the commander's job so this was no small matter.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen he has the right to have his case heard. The Romans recognised the leadership of the Jewish Sanhedrin over matters pertaining to Jewish customs and laws so it makes sense that the commander set up a meeting of this group.

Reading about Paul being interviewed by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin reminds us of Jesus appearing before them years earlier ([Matthew 26:57-68](#)). Caiaphas was the High Priest then while Ananias is the High Priest Paul appears before now. Both Jesus and Paul were struck while appearing before the Sanhedrin.

When Paul brought up the fact that he was a Pharisee and a son of a Pharisee he must have known it would set the members of the Sanhedrin against one another.

Some members followed the strict religious teachings of the Pharisees while others followed the more unorthodox views of the Sadducees. Specifically, Pharisees believed in a resurrection and Sadducees did not. Pharisees began taking Paul's side and Sadducees just became angrier.

Things turned violent and Paul, once again, was returned to the barracks where he had first been taken. God had specific plans for Paul. He was even using the power of the Roman military to protect him for his future purpose. Paul had been led to Jerusalem by the Spirit and now...

*The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."*




Paul's nephew is described as "young" but no specific age is given. That he could be an older child seems possible because, when Paul asked him to go to the commander with the information concerning a plot, *"the commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, 'What is it you want to tell me?'"* Acts 23:19, NIV.

The commander realises this problem cannot be solved in Jerusalem and that Paul must be transported, under guard to Caesarea, and the case must be heard before the governor, Antonius Felix.

[Read more about what happens next in Caesarea in the story "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 in your class to know that, if this young man had not spoken up and Paul been killed, Paul would not have gone on to write many of the books of New Testament. Young people really can make a difference.

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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## 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."

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## 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.

But Paul was a Roman citizen and he could not just be put in prison for nothing. The Roman commander in charge called a meeting of all the Jewish leaders to listen to their accusations. The group of Jewish leaders was called the "Sanhedrin".

When Paul stood up in front of the Sanhedrin he told them that 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 wrong.

Paul continued to tell them that he had not done anything wrong. Then Paul said that he was a Pharisee and that 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 with each other.

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

The next night something very unexpected happened to Paul. Jesus Christ, himself, stood next to 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 take care of 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.

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

Paul's nephew ran to the place 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 had a plan 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! If this young man had not spoken up and Paul been killed, Paul would not have gone on to write many of the books of New Testament.

Paul's nephew helped Paul. What can you do to help others?

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## 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, student interaction and/or emotion.

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

## Additional Visual Aids for this Story:

1. [Paul's Nephew Uncovers Plot\\_Slideshow to download](#)  
(.pptx 5.2 MB file size)
2. [Pauls Nephew Uncovers Plot\\_Slideshow to download\\_older format](#)  
(.ppt 5.5 MB file size)
3. [Pauls Nephew Uncovers Plot\\_Visual Aid to download and print](#)  
(.pdf 1.9 MB file size)

## Review Questions:

1. What is the Sanhedrin? A group of Jewish leaders.
2. When some Jews were making a plan to try to kill Paul, who overheard them? Paul's nephew
3. 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

4. What did the Romans do with Paul when they heard about the secret plan?  
They took him secretly at night to another city (Caesarea)

## Song Suggestions:

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

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

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

*Activities:*

- [Use finger puppets to tell the story.](#)
- Help the class make a list of any children they can think of in the bible [Miriam and Moses, Joseph, the slave of Naaman's wife, Jesus, Rhoda (the slave girl in Acts 12)] and discuss what they did.
- Make a list of things children and young adults can do today to serve God.
- Think of a project your class can do to help the church in some way (Visit someone, clean part of the church building or gardens, make food baskets to help someone in need, etc.)

*Crafts:*

- Make a relief map of Paul's Journeys featuring the place in today's story. If you are studying about Paul's journeys over a few lessons then 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 <http://www.squidoo.com/salt-dough-maps>
- If you are teaching a series of lessons about Paul then 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 ([printable picture here](#)). Alternatively, you might draw a new outline shape of him each week on a whiteboard or even with a stick in the sand (if you are outside) and guide children in adding descriptive words or events inside the outlined shape as a review. Lessons from the life of Paul are:



Instructions: Print a picture for each student. As you teach various stories about Paul the student writes facts about him in the margins. Alternatively, enlarge the picture and complete it as a class project.  
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- [Saul \(Paul\) Becomes a Christian](#)
- [The Antioch Church](#)
- [Paul's 1st Journey- Lystra](#)
- [Paul's 2nd Journey-Macedonian Vision](#)
- [Lydia Becomes a Christian](#)
- [A Jailer Becomes a Christian](#)
- [The Noble Bereans](#)
- [Paul Preaches in Athens-Mars Hill](#)
- [Priscilla and Aquila](#)
- [Paul's 3rd Journey- Ephesus](#)
- [Eutychus Falls from a Window](#)
- [Paul Goes to Jerusalem](#)
- [Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot](#)
- [Paul's Trial](#)
- [Paul's Shipwreck](#)
- [Paul Writes Letters from Prison](#)



Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)  
[Click here for "Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Audio youtube clip with reading of Acts 23, NIV \(Youtube\)](#)
- [List of practical ways children can serve God \(sonbeamz.com\)](#)
- [List of ways to teach children to serve \(gardnerfbc.org\)](#)
- [Review: Create a "passport" that covers the life of Paul. Good visual ideas and activities. Could be split up to go with several lessons or taught all together as a review of previous lessons concerning Paul \(kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/paul-3rd-journey-to-rome/>

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