

PAUL'S MISSION

Bible Basis: Acts 16:16–40; 1 Thessalonians 1:2–5; 3:9–13; 4:16–18; 5:16–28; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:12–18, 27; 13:1–7; 15:21; 16:23–24; Galatians 5:22–25; 6:18

Key Verse: He asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus.” —Acts 16:30–31, NIV

Bible Point: Jesus saves us if we believe in him. I can choose to believe.

Resource: *The Story for Kids* Chapter 29: “Paul’s Mission”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: 2 books, card, jar lid, pebbles

Ask, **Do you think it’s true that everything has a breaking point? Let’s do an experiment and find out.** Ask a couple volunteers to help you set the books a few inches apart, then lay the card on top of them to span the gap like a bridge. Set the jar lid on the card. Let volunteers set a few pebbles at a time on the lid. When the card falls, count the pebbles. Now roll the card into a cylinder. Put the side where the edges come together on the bottom and flatten slightly to set the curved shape on the book. Put the jar lid on top again, and again add pebbles. The children will discover that the curved card can support a heavier load than the flat card. Talk about:

- Were you surprised that the shape of the card made a difference?
- Can you think of anything that can’t break?

Say, **In the Bible story today, we’ll hear about something that broke when no one thought it ever could.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Kids*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 29*

Tell the story from *The Story for Kids*, Chapter 29. You can also have the children find Acts 16 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

Good News: Believe in Jesus

As you tell this story, children will mime the action to your narration. You’ll need people to play Paul, Silas, slave owners (one or two), judges (one or more), jailer, jailer’s family (several). If you have a large class, the rest of the class can be the crowd in Philippi. If you have a small class, you can

double up on roles or have those students read the Scripture verses. Encourage children to listen carefully for any hint of action, emotion, or attitude they can express by movement or expression. If they listen especially for verbs, that will be a good start. Read slowly and deliberately, pausing occasionally so children can keep up.

Paul didn't believe in Jesus at first. Then he saw Jesus in the middle of the road. When Jesus talked to him, Paul believed. Then he couldn't stop talking about Jesus everywhere he went. He traveled with his friend Silas.

Read Acts 16:16–18.

The spirit left the slave girl immediately. When her owners realized they couldn't make any more money, they got angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them to the judges. "These men are making trouble in our city," they said. "They are suggesting things that are against the law, and we can't do these things." The crowd joined the attack against Paul and Silas. Finally the judges ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped and whipped without mercy.

Paul and Silas were thrown in prison. The jailer was ordered to guard them carefully. He put them deep inside the prison and fastened their feet with chains so they couldn't get away.

Read Acts 16:25–28.

The jailer called for lights, then rushed in shaking with fear. He fell down in front of Paul and Silas. He asked them, "What must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and your family will be saved." They told the jailer all about Jesus. Paul and Silas told everyone in the jailer's house about Jesus. It was the middle of the night, but the jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas. Then he and his whole family were baptized because they believed in Jesus.

Early in the morning, the judges sent their officers to the jailer. They ordered him to let Paul and Silas go.

Paul and his helpers traveled to a lot of other places. Paul's teachings helped new Christians understand the things Jesus wanted them to do. Paul also wrote letters to churches. His words were full of encouragement and teaching to help the people be strong in their beliefs. We still have many of his letters today in the Bible, and we can read them for ourselves.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 29*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you about Paul's mission. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- **What broke in this story when no one thought it could?**
- **What good news did the jailer hear because the prison doors and chains broke?**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

Say, **The jailer wanted to know how to be saved, so Paul told him. Jesus still saves us if we believe in him.**

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose any or all of these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: LETTER BUNDLES

Stuff You Need: Paul's Letters Activity Sheet, envelopes, variety of wrapping paper, markers, scissors, glue, ribbon

Give an activity sheet to each child. Say, **After Paul got out of jail, he traveled to many places and he wrote many letters to churches. We'll make a bundle that reminds us of his letters.** Have children cut apart the letters from the activity sheet and put each one in an envelope. Decorate the outside of the envelope with markers or glue on wrapping paper. Bundle all the envelopes together and tie a ribbon around the bundle. As children work, take the opportunity to read the letters aloud. Then talk about:

- How did Paul share good news with the jailer in Philippi?
- How did Paul share good news with people in other cities?

Say, **The jailer chose to believe in Jesus, and he was saved. You can choose to believe, too.** If you sense a child may be ready to express faith, extend an invitation to talk privately.

OPTION 2: PERSECUTION PRAYER

Stuff You Need: information and prayer requests for the persecuted church, index cards, pencils

Before class, gather information about the persecuted church as well as prayer requests. Some organizations dedicated to helping the persecuted church have information specifically for kids.

In class, say, **Christians in some places in the world are not allowed to meet and worship God. They might be fired, beaten, thrown in prison, or even be killed for believing in Jesus. We are going to take time to pray for those people.** Allow children to take time to read the information and pray individually or in groups for the persecuted church. Encourage them to write some of the prayer requests on an index card and pray for them throughout the week.

OPTION 3: BREAK THE CHAINS

Stuff You Need: Break the Chains Activity Sheet, pencils, Bibles, one or more concordances

Say, **We are often chained down by things that we do or believe. These words or actions or thoughts keep us stuck and hold us back from believing in God's love and mercy.** Talk to the class about some of the words in the Bible that can help and encourage us to break out of the chains. Give an activity sheet, pencil, and a Bible to each child. Help them find words and passages in the concordance that help break the chains for them. Write them in the links of the chain and share.

OPTION 4: FAITH JOURNEY

Talk about faith with the large group.

What do you think influences or makes a person have faith in something or someone? What might influence a person to have faith in God?

If you are comfortable, share your faith journey with the group. Talk about the time you first realized what faith meant to you and how it has made a difference in your life. Did you grow up in a faith-filled family and so was influenced by their beliefs or did you learn about God on your own? Talk about things in the world and in your life that have strengthened your faith and brought you closer to God.

After you have shared, ask the group if anyone would like to share why they believe in God. Talk about people that may have taught them about faith and being a believer.

Share more stories from Acts and other New Testament stories about how the disciples spread the words of God throughout the world. Perhaps have small groups dramatize one of the stories for the rest of the class.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Pray in small groups thanking God that Jesus saves us if we believe in him. Try to be available to any child who is curious about salvation. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 29*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.