

PAUL'S FINAL DAYS

Bible Basis: Acts 20:22–28, 36–38; 22:22–29; 27:1, 9–41; 28:1–10

Key Verse: I only want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to give witness to others about the good news of God's grace. —Acts 20:24, NIV

Bible Point: Paul served God with his whole life. God wants me to serve him, too.

Resource: *The Story for Kids*, Chapter 30: "Paul's Final Days"

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: box, large towel, small kitchen utensils or hand tools

Be sure to choose items that children won't hurt themselves with. Some suggestions: can opener, rubber spatula, small screwdriver, clamp, measuring spoon, measuring tape, whisk, wrench, paintbrush, bolt. Put at least five items in the box and lay a towel over the box. Ask volunteers to put one hand in the box, under the towel, and see what items they can identify by touch. Then reveal all the tools. Talk about:

- What kinds of jobs would you use these tools for?
- How important is it to like the job you're doing?

Say, **In the Bible story today, we'll find out how Paul felt about doing the job God gave him to do.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Kids*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 30*, masking tape

Optional: spray bottles filled with water

Tell the story from *The Story for Kids*, Chapter 30. You can also have the children find Acts 20 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

PAUL SERVES WITH HIS WHOLE LIFE

Ahead of time, use masking tape to make the outline of a ship that is large enough for all the children to sit within it. Designate one or more students (depending on the size of your group) to be guards and the rest of the children are prisoners. Several times during the story, you'll give a signal to get up and move to a different part of the ship. When it's time to move, the guards can tell prisoners where to go and prisoners must obey. If you like, you can also give guards spray bottles

filled with water to spray on prisoners while they move. Practice this question and response then use it at each stop.

Leader: What did Paul want to do?

Group: Complete the work.

After Paul met Jesus in the middle of the road to Damascus, he served God with his whole life. He traveled for many years starting new churches and visiting Christians until there were churches all over the place. Paul taught people to share the good news about Jesus with others. Many leaders in the Roman government wanted to stop the churches from growing because they thought Jesus had been a bad person. Since Paul was teaching about Jesus, these people kept trying to stop Paul from preaching.

Paul knew he might get caught soon, but he still kept on serving God. Jerusalem was a dangerous place for Christians, but when God wanted Paul to go to Jerusalem, that's exactly what Paul decided to do. So he got on a boat headed to Jerusalem. Along the way, he stopped at a few places to say goodbye to his friends as he sailed toward Jerusalem.

Pause and have the children get up and move to new spots. Make sure everyone moves. Use the question/response.

One of the places Paul stopped was Miletus. From there, he sent for his friends who lived in Ephesus, and they came to see him. He talked about what would happen in Jerusalem. Read Acts 20: 22–24. Then Paul hugged and kissed his friends and they said goodbye. He went on to Jerusalem.

Pause and have the children get up and move to new spots. Use the question/response.

Once he got to Jerusalem, some Roman soldiers found him, and Paul was taken to prison. A crowd shouted that Paul should die! So the commanding officer gave the order for Paul to be whipped.

Paul said, "Does the law allow you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" The officer didn't know Paul was a Roman citizen. Most Jews were not Roman citizens. The officer was shocked. He should not have put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains. Since Paul was a citizen, he had special rights. Paul said that he wanted to have a trial in Rome with the emperor, Caesar.

Pause and have the children get up and move to new spots. Use the question/response.

Read Acts 27:9–11.

A gentle south wind began to blow, and the journey began. Before long, though, the gentle wind turned into a bad storm. The ship was in danger after all. Paul had been right all along. For two long weeks, the ship's sailors fought against the storm, but everything got worse and worse. The sailors got so worried that they even stopped eating. Paul got everyone to eat to keep their strength up and said no one was going to be hurt. Encouraged, the sailors threw everything overboard they didn't need. This made the ship

lighter. But even that didn't stop the danger. The ship got stuck on a sandbar and the pounding waves broke the ship to pieces. Everyone on board, 276 people, swam for shore.

Pause for the children to move to new spots. Use the question/response.

Everyone made it safely! *Read Acts 28:1–3, 5, 9–10.*

After three months on Malta, the weather was better, and another ship came to pick up the prisoners and sailors so they could continue their trip.

Pause for the children to move to new spots. Use the question/response.

Paul was once again sailing for Rome. Once he got there, he was allowed to live in a house, but a soldier always guarded him to make sure he didn't escape. He stayed there for two years. Paul used the time to write letters to churches and preach to people who came to see him at the house. Finally, Paul was put to death. He gave his whole life to serve God. All he ever wanted to do was finish the work God gave him to do and tell people about Jesus.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 30*. Ask the children to look at the picture and tell you about how Paul served God. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- How do we know Paul liked the job God gave him to do?
- What was Paul willing to give up to serve God with his whole life?

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

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

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

OPTION 1: SHIPWRECK WORD SEARCH

Stuff You Need: Shipwreck Word Search Activity Sheet, pencils

Give an activity sheet to each child. Say, **In the story, Paul said he wanted only to complete the work that God gave him to do. Let's complete the work of a puzzle to review how Paul served God with his whole life.** Allow time to work on the word search puzzle. If children prefer, they may work in pairs. Go over the answers, then talk about:

- What do you think kept Paul going as he served God?
- How did Paul serve God with his whole life?

Say, **God called Paul to be a missionary and spread the good news of Jesus. As you grow older, I hope you'll want to find out what God is calling you to do so you can serve God, too.**

OPTION 2: SERVING CHARADES

Take a moment to let the children think about ways that they can serve God. If the children need help thinking of ideas, start them off with things like taking out the trash without being told, sharing with a younger sibling, taking cookies to and visiting with a lonely person. After children have had time to think, have each child in turn act out the way they thought about to serve God while the rest of the class guesses. You children will enjoy it if you take a turn acting as well.

OPTION 3: WHOLE LIFE POSTER

Stuff You Need: sturdy paper, colored pencils or markers, old family magazines, scissors, glue

Say, **Paul served God with his whole life. Make a poster to help you remember that you can serve God with your whole life, too.** Some children may want to draw on their poster, while others will want to make a collage of words and pictures cut from old magazines. Talk about ways they can serve God with their whole lives even while they are young.

OPTION 4: I CAN SERVE GOD

It is true. God does want us to serve him. And there are many ways we can do that. Some people serve God through good works toward other people. Others serve him by praying and living a good, simple life. This list could go on for a very long time.

Talk to your group about how children can serve God. Start by talking about all the ways Paul served—prayer, preaching, healing, suffering in God’s name, traveling and facing hardships for the sake of spreading the word of God.

Are these things that children can do? If they answer yes, then talk about how and have them be specific.

List these ways children can serve and talk very seriously with the group about how they would be willing to serve God in their community, whether the church community or the larger community around them. Choose one of the actions and start to formulate a plan with the whole group of how this could be done.

Have some volunteers ready to help as this could be a long-lasting project such as a food drive, a blanket collection, a penny drive, or weekly bake sales that benefit an organization or a family facing hardship.

As the plan is formed, talk about whether the group thinks Paul went through this type of planning or whether he just went as the Spirit moved him.

Bring the project to completion, taking as long as it needs.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Pray in small groups asking God for ways to serve him. Encourage the children to look for ways to serve God throughout the week. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 30*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents’ Page.