

dwell[®]



Dear Family,

During the next six weeks, we're going to continue to follow in Paul's footsteps—into dangerous and scary places, through riots and storms—as he brings the good news to many people and places.

These are wonderful stories to share as a family, full of drama and suspense. Take time to be amazed together at the power of the Spirit in spreading the good news so rapidly through the work of people like Paul. Your set of God's Big Story cards will help you do that together.

Here is a glance at the upcoming sessions, with suggested questions to ask your child each week:

Date: _____ Riot in Ephesus 

Can you imagine a riot over the gospel in your city?

Date: _____ Paul's Farewell 

Imagine what would happen in your church if someone fell, died, and then was raised to life again.

Date: _____ The Brave Nephew 

With which character does each member of your family most identify? Why?

Date: _____ Paul on Trial 

Why do you suppose Luke tells us so much about the trial and all the people before whom Paul appeared?

Date: _____ Shipwreck and Malta 

Talk about dangerous storms one or more members of your family have been in. How might knowing that God is near protect you and make you feel less afraid during times like that?

Date: _____ Rome 

What do you think might have happened to Paul after what we read in the last verses of Acts?

Memory Challenge

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

John 14:1-3, NIV

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“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

—John 14:1-3, NRSV

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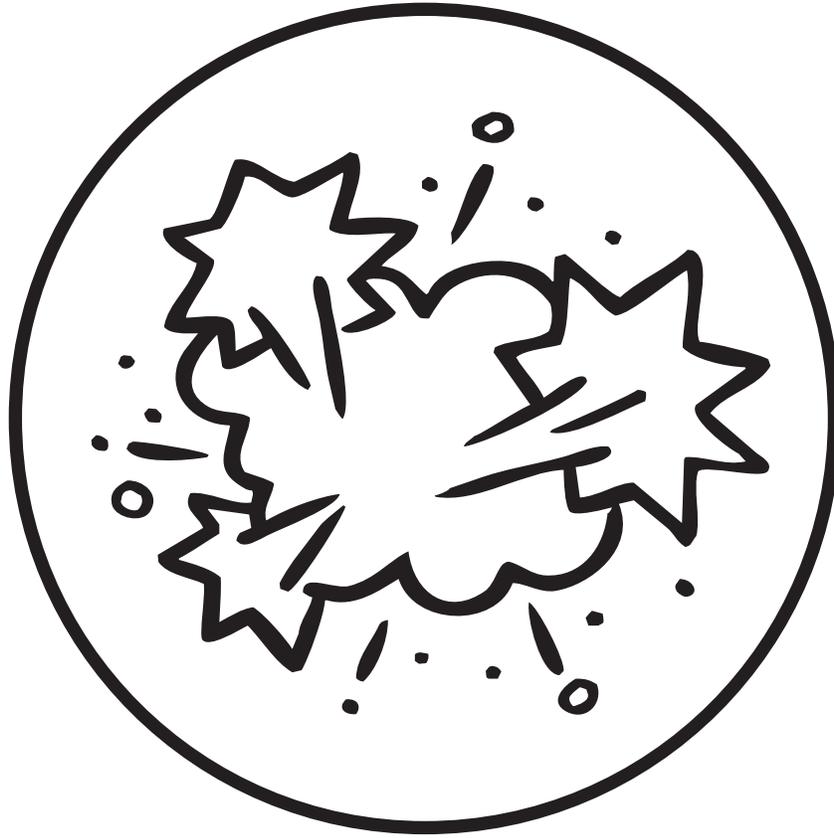
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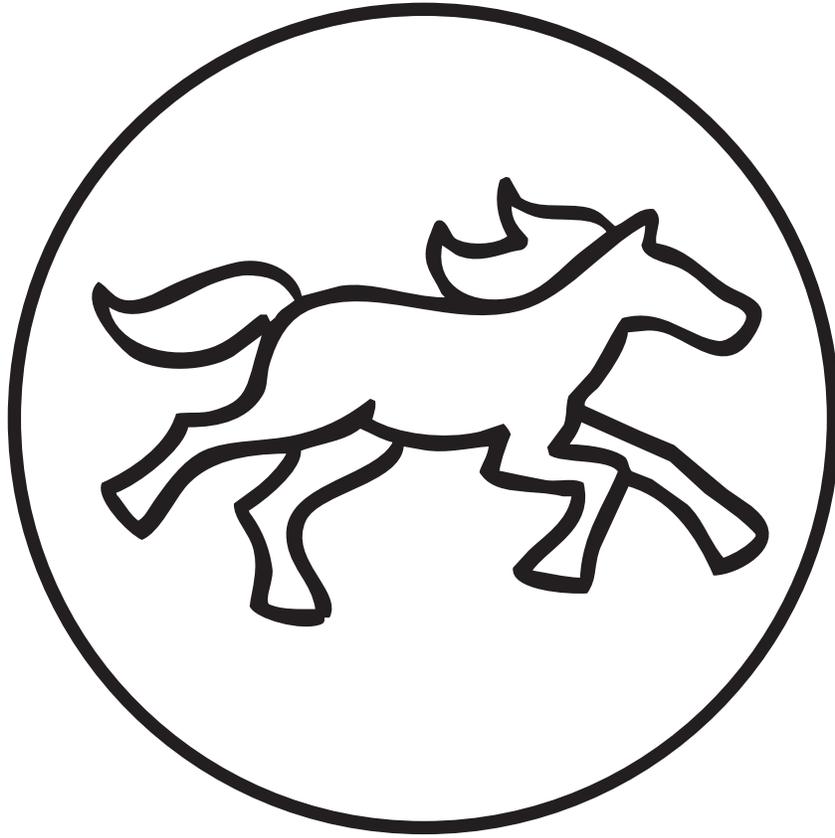
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Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 1



Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 2



Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 3



Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 4



Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 5



Marvel: Year 1, Unit 6, Session 6

Paul and His Friends

Paul: (*speaking to his friends, who listen intently*) Most of you were baptized by John the Baptist. John preached a baptism of radical life change so that people would be ready to receive the one coming after him—who turned out to be Jesus! You're ready now for the real thing, for Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Friends: (*nod in acceptance*) Paul, teach us about the Christian way of life.

Paul: (*hands on friends' shoulders*) I will give you ample opportunity to hear the Message of the Master.

(Paul exits. Friends stand off to one side as Demetrius and his friends enter.)

Based on Acts 19, *The Message*

Demetrius and His Friends

(Enter as Paul exits)

Demetrius: (*speaks forcefully*) Men, you know that we have a good thing going here—and now you've seen how Paul has barged in and discredited what we're doing by telling people that there's no such thing as a god made with hands (*holds up statue*). A lot of people are going along with him. Not only is our little business in danger of falling apart, but the temple of our famous goddess Artemis will certainly end up in a pile of rubble as her glorious reputation fades to nothing.

Friends: (*yell*) Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! (*motion for crowd to join*)

Based on Acts 19, *The Message*

The Crowd

Crowd: (*as Demetrius's friends motion for crowd to come, rush toward them, shouting*)

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

(Grab Paul's two friends and push or shove them into the middle of the crowd)

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

Based on Acts 19, *The Message*

The City Clerk

(Enter as crowd shouts 4 times)

Clerk: (*Stands on chair with arms held high to silence crowd*) Quiet down! Fellow citizens, is there anyone anywhere who doesn't know that our dear city, Ephesus, is protector of glorious Artemis and her sacred stone image that fell straight out of heaven? You had better get a hold of yourselves. These men you've dragged in here have done nothing to harm either our temple or our goddess. So if Demetrius and his guild of artisans have a complaint, they can take it to court and make all the accusations they want. . . . There's no excuse for what's happened today. It's time to go home!

Based on Acts 19, *The Message*

A believer
(Acts 8-12)

Demetrius
(Acts 19:17-20)

Another silversmith
(Acts 19:25)

A townsman who took part in the mob
(Acts 19:28-34)

Gaius or Aristarchus
(Acts 19:29)

The city clerk
(Acts 19:35-41)

THE EPHESUS PRESS



RIOT BREAKS OUT IN LOCAL THEATER

EPHESUS—The city of Ephesus flared into a frenzied uproar a few days ago, leaving thousands of Ephesians hoarse and confused. Local artisans banded together, led by chief silversmith Demetrius, to protest the loss in sales of their hand-crafted figurines of the goddess Artemis.

“It’s all because of that crazy missionary—Paul of Tarsus!” Demetrius complained to the Ephesus Press. “He has been wandering around our city convincing everyone to believe in his master, Jesus. He’s led the city and practically the entire province of Asia astray! Hardly anyone is worshiping the great goddess Artemis anymore, and people are no longer buying my statues. My business is falling apart, and it’s all his fault!”

“It’s all because of that crazy missionary—Paul of Tarsus!”

Demetrius rallied a large group of artisans and paraded through the city shouting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Soon the whole city joined the commotion and seized Gaius and Aristarchus, traveling companions of Paul the missionary. Taking these men to the local theater, thousands of men and women shouted at the tops of their voices for more than two hours.

“I was very confused by all of the noise,” one bystander told the press. “Some were shouting one

thing, and others were shouting something else. Most people didn’t even know why they were there or what they were shouting about.”

We received word that Paul himself wanted to address the raging mob, but his friends would not let him venture out into the theater for fear that the crowd would severely harm him. Even a few city officials who knew Paul well urged him to stay away.

After a while the city clerk quieted the crowd by encouraging Demetrius and the artisans to bring their complaints to the local proconsuls and settle their disputes in court. Then he ordered everyone else to go home. “I told the crowd to calm down and not to do anything they would regret later. Gaius and Aristarchus did not rob our temples or blaspheme the name of our goddess Artemis, so why make such a fuss? There was no need to start such a riot.”

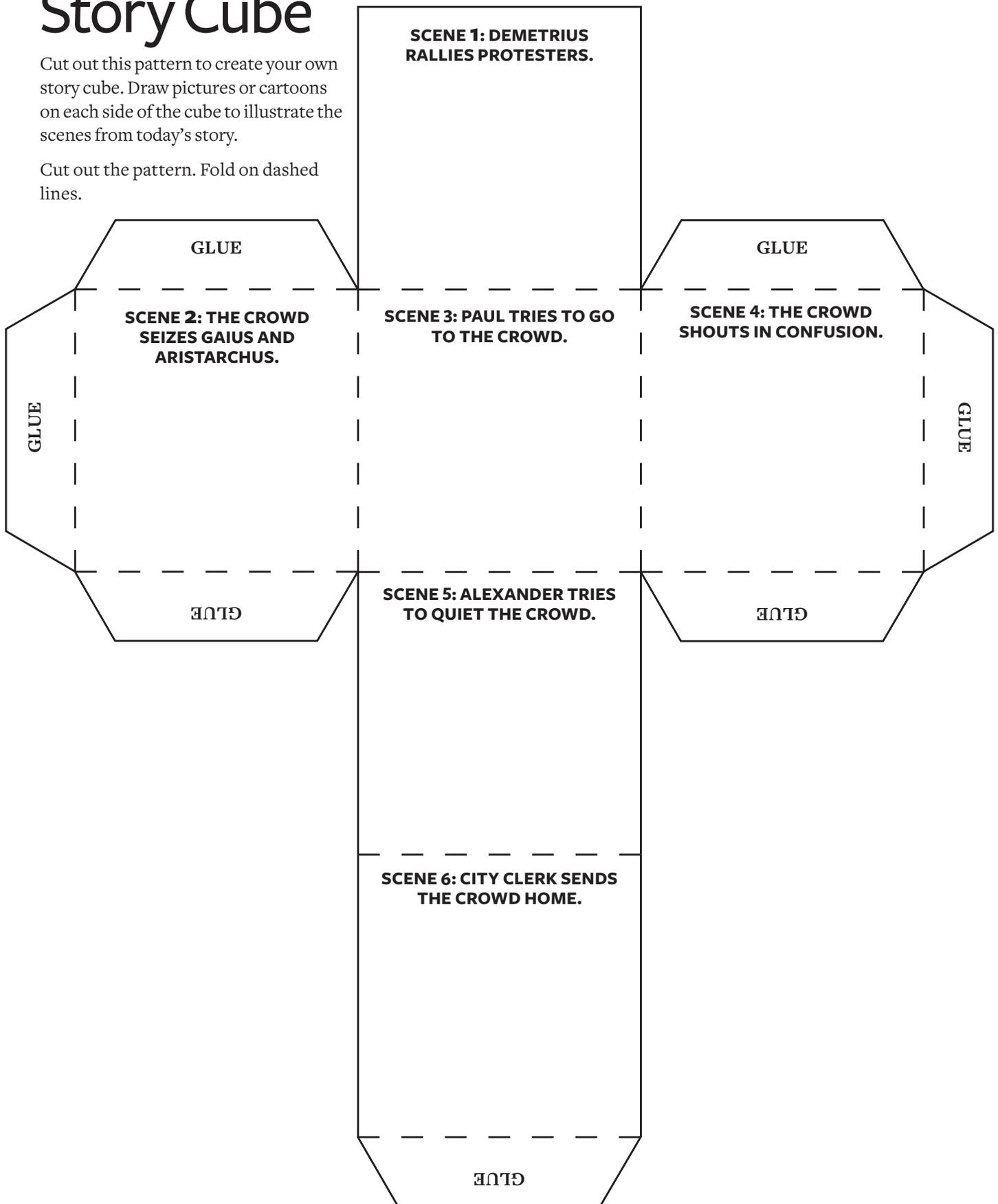
Paul and his companions could not be contacted for an interview; some heard that Paul was already off to the city of Macedonia to continue to talk about Jesus.

Press reporters did manage to speak to a member of the church Paul had started in Ephesus, though. “I’ve seen God do powerful miracles through Paul. Many people were healed of their sicknesses by simply touching one of his handkerchiefs,” the new Jesus follower told us. “I used to worship the goddess Artemis, but now I worship the true, living God.”

Story Cube

Cut out this pattern to create your own story cube. Draw pictures or cartoons on each side of the cube to illustrate the scenes from today's story.

Cut out the pattern. Fold on dashed lines.



AFRICA

Africa contains the world's largest desert, the Sahara.

SESSION 1

AFRICA

Africa has 53 countries.

SESSION 1

AFRICA

**There are around 1 billion people living in Africa,
and they speak over 1,000 different languages.**

SESSION 1

AFRICA

**Africa is the home of the Nile River,
the longest river in the world.**

SESSION 1

AFRICA

**Most of the world's gold and diamonds
come from Africa.**

SESSION 1

AUSTRALIA

Australia is located between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

SESSION 2

AUSTRALIA

The largest city in Australia is Sydney (with around 4.2 million people).

SESSION 2

AUSTRALIA

There are approximately 63 species of kangaroos living in Australia.

SESSION 2

AUSTRALIA

Australia is the only continent that is its own country.

SESSION 2

AUSTRALIA

Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea (3 countries sometimes referred to together as Oceania) have more sheep than people.

SESSION 2

ASIA

Asia is the largest continent in the world.

SESSION 3

ASIA

There are around 3 billion people living in Asia.

SESSION 3

ASIA

There are 48 countries in Asia.

SESSION 3

ASIA

Asia is home to the world's largest country (China).

SESSION 3

ASIA

**Asia is the only place in the world
where tigers live in the wild.**

SESSION 3

ASIA

**Asia contains Mount Everest,
the tallest point on earth.**

SESSION 3

SOUTH AMERICA

**Contains the world's southernmost city,
Puntas Arenas.**

SESSION 4

SOUTH AMERICA

Is home of the world's largest river—the Amazon.

SESSION 4

SOUTH AMERICA

Is home to the largest rain forests in the world.

SESSION 4

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil is the largest country in South America.

SESSION 4

SOUTH AMERICA

**Contains the Andes, the second highest
mountain range in the world.**

SESSION 4

EUROPE

There are 49 countries in Europe.

SESSION 5

EUROPE

There are about 700 million people living in Europe.

SESSION 5

EUROPE

**Europe at one time ruled almost all
the rest of the world.**

SESSION 5

EUROPE

Great Britain is the largest island in Europe.

SESSION 5

EUROPE

**Paris, France, is the largest city in Europe
(with around 9-10 million people).**

SESSION 5

NORTH AMERICA

Mexico City is the largest city in North America.

SESSION 6

NORTH AMERICA

There are around 502 million people living in North America.

SESSION 6

NORTH AMERICA

Death Valley, in California, is the lowest point on the continent.

SESSION 6

NORTH AMERICA

Lake Superior is the world's largest fresh water lake.

SESSION 6

NORTH AMERICA

Mount McKinley, in Alaska, is the tallest point on the continent.

SESSION 6

Read the passage below with members of your group.

When you see 😞, talk about the question together.

Write an answer to the question on paper or in your journal when you see 📝.

Paul's Farewell Bible Study

"You know how I lived the whole time I was with you," Paul said. "From the first day I came into Asia Minor, I was free of pride. I served the Lord with tears. I served him even though I was greatly tested by the evil plans of the Jews. You know I haven't let anyone keep me from preaching anything that would be helpful to you. I have taught you in public and from house to house. I have told both Jews and Greeks that they must turn away from their sins to God. They must have faith in our Lord Jesus."

😞 **Why might Paul be reminding the people of Ephesus of what he did when he was there?**

📝 **Imagine that you are a member of the church in Ephesus. How did Paul's time in your city change your life?**

"Now I am going to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit compels me. I don't know what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Spirit warns me. He tells me that I will face prison and suffering. But my life means nothing to me. I only want to finish the race. I 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."

😞 **In what ways might the Holy Spirit also lead and guide people/us today?**

📝 **Some ways I have felt the Holy Spirit leading me include . . .**

"I have spent time with you preaching about the kingdom. I know that none of you will ever see me again. So I tell you today that I am not guilty if anyone has not believed. I haven't let anyone keep me from telling you everything God wants you to do.

"Keep watch over yourselves. Keep watch over all the believers. The Holy Spirit has made you leaders over them. Be shepherds of God's church. He bought

it with his own blood. I know that after I leave, wild wolves will come in among you. They won't spare any of the sheep. Even men from your own people will rise up and twist the truth. They want to get the believers to follow them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning you. Night and day I warned each of you with tears."

😞 **What does Paul mean when he tells church leaders to "keep watch over yourselves"? To "keep watch over all believers"?**

📝 **Who are some of the people the Holy Spirit has put in your life to help your faith grow and remain strong?**

"Now I commit you to God's care. I commit you to the word of his grace. It can build you up. Then you will share in what God plans to give all his people. I haven't longed for anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that I have used my own hands to meet my needs. I have also met the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that we must work hard and help the weak. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

😞 **What does this farewell speech tell you about Paul? About the Holy Spirit? About things we should put first place in our lives?**

When Paul had said this, he got down on his knees with all of them and prayed. They all cried as they hugged and kissed him. What hurt them the most was that he had said they would never see his face again. Then they went with him to the ship.

📝 **The saddest goodbye I ever had to make was . . .**

The Brave Nephew

Hi, I have an amazing story to tell you. It's about my Uncle Paul. You've heard some stories about him, I think. About the time he sang songs in jail. And about the time he got in the middle of a riot in Ephesus.

Seems like Uncle Paul runs into more trouble than most people. I think that's because he's so brave—because he refuses to ever stop telling people about Jesus—no matter what.

One time I got involved in one of his adventures. It happened when he came back to Jerusalem—even though everyone warned him against it. When he got into town the Jewish leaders spotted him in the temple right away, and they knew what he was doing: teaching people about Jesus!

Some of the Jewish leaders knew that Paul was telling Gentiles about Jesus—and word got around that he had even brought some of them into the temple itself. This part wasn't true, but these leaders were terribly angry, and their shouting and running around turned into a riot. They dragged Paul from the temple and would have killed him if someone hadn't told the Roman commander what was happening.

That's when the commander intervened and ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. At first the commander planned to torture Paul and get him to tell the truth. But then he found out that Paul was a Roman citizen. He could get in big trouble for hurting a Roman citizen!

The next day the commander wanted to find out exactly why Uncle Paul was being accused by the Jews, so he released him and ordered all the religious leaders in the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin to meet together and allow Paul to explain himself.

Not too long after my uncle began speaking, the leaders broke out into a huge argument. Some sided with my uncle, but others disagreed vigorously. The argument became so violent that the commander was worried that Uncle Paul would be torn to pieces by the members of the Sanhedrin. The soldiers had to take my uncle away from the crowd again!

Here's where I come on the scene. The next day I overheard the religious leaders plotting to kill my uncle. They vowed that they would not eat or drink until he was dead. Here was their plan: they would ask the Roman commander to bring Paul back for further questioning. As the soldiers led my uncle through the city streets before them, the religious leaders planned to ambush and kill him!

I went to my uncle right away to tell him what I had heard. Uncle Paul called a guard to his cell and asked him to take me to the commander. I told the commander everything I knew, and he urged me, for my own protection, not to tell anyone I had spoken to him.

But he took the plot I had heard about seriously. That very night he sent my uncle to Caesarea, the Roman headquarters, and he sent a whole group of soldiers with Uncle Paul to keep him safe.

I'm really glad that God helped stop the Sanhedrin from carrying out that terrible plan. Now all I can do is pray that my uncle remains safe.

WHAT IF . . .

Paul's nephew didn't overhear the plan?

WHAT IF . . .

the captain didn't believe the nephew?

WHAT IF . . .

the nephew got caught by the Jewish leaders when he tried to visit the commander?

WHAT IF . . .

the soldiers didn't protect Paul when he left the city?

WHAT IF . . .

everyone who listened to Paul agreed with what he said?

**Persuade the group to believe
you have been on the moon.**

**Persuade the group to run
around the room three times.**

**Persuade the group to believe
that you have x-ray vision.**

**Persuade everyone in the group
to stand on one leg and cackle
like a chicken.**

Paul on Trial

VOICES

Narrator

Felix

Jews

Paul

Festus

Agrippa

Bernice

Narrator: Thanks to Paul’s nephew and the Roman commander in Jerusalem, Paul had escaped death by the Jews. At night the Roman soldiers brought Paul secretly to the city of Caesarea and handed him over to Felix, the governor.

Five days later, the Jews came to see Felix. They demanded that Paul be put on trial.

Jews: Most excellent Felix, we have found this man Paul to be a troublemaker! He stirs up riots and is the ringleader for this new radical group of Jews who claim to follow “The Way.”

He even tried to contaminate our holy temple by bringing a *Gentile* into the courts, so we seized him. We believe you will also find this man guilty.

Felix: Well, Paul, what do you have to say about these accusations?

Paul: Most respected governor, these men can’t prove any of the charges they are making against me. I did go to visit the temple in Jerusalem twelve days ago. But I never brought a Gentile into the temple court, and no one can prove that I argued or stirred up a riot anywhere in the city. I will admit, however, that I worship the God of our forefathers and am a follower of “The Way.” I am on trial today because I claim that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Felix: Hmmmm. I think we’d better wait until the Roman commander, Lysias, gets here. Then we’ll get a clearer picture of who is right and who is wrong.

Narrator: But Felix never held another trial for Paul. Instead, to keep the religious leaders satisfied, Felix kept Paul in jail. But he often sent for Paul and talked with him. Felix was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe to get out of prison. Instead Paul continued to speak to Felix about the good news of Jesus.

After two years had passed, another governor named Festus came to power in Caesarea and immediately resumed Paul’s trial. Many Jews came to testify against Paul, bringing serious charges that no one could prove. Paul again defended himself.

Paul: Wise governor, I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law, the temple, or against Caesar.

Festus: Are you willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there?

Paul: I am standing in a Roman court of law. I have done nothing wrong against the Jews, as you very well know. You have no right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!

Festus: Very well, then—to Caesar you will go! I will send you to Rome to stand trial before the emperor himself.

Narrator: But before Paul could leave for Rome, another visitor arrived: King Agrippa. When he heard about Paul, he was curious.

King Agrippa: I would like to hear this man myself, Festus. Could you arrange that?

Festus: Certainly! You can speak to him tomorrow if you’d like.

Narrator: So the next day Paul was brought before the splendidly dressed King Agrippa, his sister Bernice, the governor Festus, and the officers and leading men in the city.

But Paul was fearless. He knew that the Holy Spirit would give him the right words to say.

King Agrippa: Paul, you have permission to speak for yourself.

Paul: King Agrippa, most excellent Festus, and all gathered here: I was born into a Jewish family, was raised in the Jewish laws, and have observed them ever since I was a child.

In fact, I once persecuted Christians. I hated everyone who believed in Jesus. I threw them into prison and tried to have them killed. But one day, while I was on my way to arrest more Christians, a light from heaven blazed in front of me. I fell to the ground, and Jesus himself spoke to me!

He said, “Paul! You are going to be my servant. You will preach about me, and people will believe in me and be forgiven.”

So, King Agrippa, I tell everyone that they should be sorry for their sins. They should turn to God. They should believe what all the prophets and Moses have written: that Jesus would be killed, would rise from the dead, and would spread his light over the world.

Festus: Paul, you are crazy! All of this studying has gone to your head and is making you insane!

Paul: I’m not insane, most excellent Festus. What I’m saying is true. King Agrippa, I know that you study and believe the prophets. You understand what I am talking about, don’t you?

Agrippa: Do you expect me to become a Christian in such a short time?

Paul: Short or long, I hope that all of you will become believers like me, except for these chains.

King Agrippa: Festus, this man has done nothing wrong. He shouldn’t be kept in chains. If he hadn’t appealed to Caesar, he could be set free.

News Conference “Cheat” Sheet

- Did you believe what Paul said about Jesus?
- What was the most interesting thing Paul said today?
- Why do the Jewish leaders want to kill Paul?
- Do you think Paul should be punished?
- Does anything about the trial make you uneasy or scared?
- What will you tell the Jewish leaders about what happened here today?
- What do you think will happen when Paul goes to Rome?
- What happens when you do things that the Jewish leaders don't like or agree with?

Shipwreck Action

Based on Acts 27, NIV

Luke: It was decided that we would sail for Italy. Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a Roman commander named Julius. We boarded the ship and sailed along the coast toward a place called Fair Havens. It was the time of year when sailing had already become dangerous because of the storms.

Paul: Men, I can see that our trip is going to be dangerous. If we sail on, the ship and everything in it will be lost. Our own lives will be in danger too.

Luke: But the commander didn't listen to Paul. Instead, he followed the advice of the pilot and the ship's owner and decided to sail on.

Storm: (*blow lightly*) A gentle south wind began to blow. Before very long a wind blew (*blow harder and harder*) down from the island. It had the force of a hurricane.

Ship: (*rock back and forth and up and down*) The ship was caught by the storm. We couldn't keep sailing into the wind. So we gave up and allowed ourselves to be driven along (*move forward, tossing to and fro*).

Sailors: We almost lost the lifeboat. So we lifted it on board (*pretend to hoist lifeboat on board*). Then we tied ropes under the ship itself to hold it together (*pretend to tie ropes around the ship*). We lowered the sea anchor (*pretend to drop anchor*).

Luke: We took a very bad beating from the storm.

Sailors: We began to throw the ship's contents overboard (*toss cargo*). On the third day we even threw the ship's gear overboard with our hands (*toss gear*).

Luke: The sun and stars didn't appear for many days. The storm was terrible. So we gave up all hope of being saved. The men hadn't eaten for a long time. Paul stood up in front of them.

Paul: Now I beg you to be brave. Not one of you will die. Only the ship will be destroyed. I belong to God and serve him. Last night his angel stood beside me. The angel said,

Angel: Do not be afraid, Paul. You must go on trial in front of Caesar. God has shown his grace by sparing the lives of all those sailing with you.

Paul: Men, continue to be brave. I have faith in God. It will happen as he told me. But we must run the ship aground on the beach of some island.

Luke: On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Sea of Adria. About midnight the sailors had a feeling we were approaching land.

Sailors: (*pretend to measure the depth of the water*) We measured the depth of the water (*hold up measuring "stick"*) and found that it was 120 feet deep. A short time later we measured the depth again (*measure and hold up stick again*). This time it was 90 feet deep. We were afraid we would crash against the rocks. So we dropped four anchors from the back of the ship (*count 1, 2, 3, 4, as you drop anchors*) and prayed that daylight would come so we could see how close we were to the rocks (*bow heads*).

Luke: Just before dawn Paul tried to get us all to eat.

CAST

Luke

Paul

Storm (two or more kids with arms linked who mimic the sounds and force of the wind; one serves as the voice of the storm)

Ship (two or more kids with hands on shoulders who mimic the actions of the ship; one serves as the voice of the ship)

Sailors (two or more kids who carry out efforts to save the ship; one serves as the spokesperson)

Angel

Paul: For the last 14 days you have wondered what would happen. You have gone without food. Now I am asking you to eat some food. You need it to live. Not one of you will lose a single hair from your head.

Luke: After Paul said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God. He did this where all could see him. Then he broke it and began to eat. All of us were filled with hope. So we ate the food. There were 276 of us on board. We ate as much as we wanted.

Sailors: We needed to make the ship lighter. So we threw the rest of the grain into the sea (*heave bags of grain overboard*).

Luke: When daylight came, we saw a bay with a sandy beach. We didn't recognize the place. But we decided to run the ship onto the beach if we could.

Sailors: So we cut the anchors loose and left them in the sea (*pretend to cut the rope holding the anchors*). At the same time we untied the rudders. We lifted the sail (*hoist sail in the air at the front of the ship*). Then we headed for the beach.

Ship: But the ship hit a sandbar (*move forward with a sudden jolt*). The front of it got stuck and wouldn't move (*attempt to rock back and forth without success*).

Storm: The back of the ship was broken to pieces by the pounding waves (*storm group members "pound" gently into ship group members, who scatter*).

Luke: The commander ordered those who could swim to jump overboard and swim to land. The rest were supposed to get there on boards or pieces of the ship. In that way everyone reached land safely.

Shipwrecked!

Hello, my name is Luke. I'm a friend of Paul's. I've been traveling with him for a while now, and I've seen God do some really amazing things! Right now we're on the island of Malta, and how we arrived here is nothing short of a miracle. God has shown again and again that he's in control. Let me tell you about what happened this time.

We were on our way to Rome to await Paul's trial before Caesar. We traveled from harbor to harbor, searching for a safe place to stay for the winter, since sailing the Great Sea during the winter season is a really dangerous thing to do. The winds were already getting strong as we sailed, and Paul sensed that we were headed for trouble: "Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to our ship and cargo, and to our own lives as well," he pleaded. But no one listened to him.

The Roman commander who was in charge of all the prisoners on board totally ignored Paul's warning and followed the advice of the ship owner to continue sailing. Pretty soon we experienced a terrible storm—as ferocious as a hurricane. *(You may want to play the segment of the ship in a storm mentioned in the main step.)*

We were terrified! We lost all control of the boat and were tossed to and fro like twigs in a rushing river. We passed large ropes under the ship and tied them together to keep the boat from breaking apart. And we all worked like mad to keep the ship from going under by throwing cargo overboard to lighten the load.

But the storm just didn't end. It dragged on for days with no sign of letting up. We were wet, exhausted, and famished. We didn't eat or sleep because we spent so much time trying to keep the ship afloat. The days turned into weeks. We couldn't even make out the slightest twinkle of the sun or stars. Only dark clouds loomed in the sky, and the winds raged on. We finally lost all hope of survival.

Then Paul stood up and encouraged us: "Although you should have taken my advice not to continue sailing, take courage, men. None of us will be lost in this storm; only the ship will be destroyed." He explained that an angel of God had appeared to him and encouraged him.

Sometime later we realized that we were getting close to land. Paul urged us to eat to regain our strength. For the first time in over two weeks, since the start of the storm, we began to feel hopeful; some of us were even able to smile. When daylight came, we saw a bay with a sandy beach ahead. Cutting the anchors loose, the sailors let the ship move straight ahead so that its bottom would scrape the sandy shore and run aground. As we approached the beach, the pounding waves broke the ship into pieces, and those who could jumped overboard and swam to shore. Those who couldn't swim grabbed onto pieces of the ship and floated to the land. All 276 of us on board made it safely to the island. We were all saved, just as Paul had told us we would be! Our terrifying adventure at sea was over. Thanks be to God!

When we arrived on shore, we discovered that we were on the island of Malta. The residents of this tiny island were very kind to us. Because it was raining and cold, they built us a large fire to keep us warm. As Paul gathered a pile of wood to put on the fire, a deadly snake called a viper bit him on the hand. But Paul, unharmed, shook the snake into the fire. The islanders watched him for a long time to see whether anything bad would happen to him from the snake bite, but nothing did. They concluded that he must be a god!

During our time in Malta Paul healed many people who were sick. After staying with the islanders for a little while, we finally set sail once again on another ship for Rome.

Dear Friends,

Finally, after a terrible shipwreck and three months on the island, we have reached Rome! I—the one who proclaims the one true God—traveled here on a ship figure-headed with images of the twin pretend gods Castor and Pollux! I was tired and discouraged as we trekked along the long road to get here. I was thinking about being in prison again and going to trial against the Jews. “Why me, Lord?” I wanted to ask.

Pause: What events that we’ve heard about as a group over the past few weeks might have made Paul discouraged?

But I was encouraged when some Christians from Rome came all the way to the Forum of Appius to meet me. They had traveled on foot for more than thirty miles! They had tears in their eyes as they hugged me. I was glad to see that they really wanted me to come to Rome, to teach them and to help in preaching the good news of Jesus.

Pause: What can Christians in our day do to encourage each other?

When we arrived in Rome, Julius the centurion let me stay in a private house, with only a soldier to guard me! That gave me much more freedom than being in a prison cell. Julius knows by now that I am not a dangerous prisoner. I thank God for being able to stay at this house.

I’ve had a lot of visitors. People are curious about why I’m here. I invited the leaders of the Jews in Rome to come and hear what I have to say. After all, I didn’t know what kinds of lies they might have heard from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem—the ones who are coming to accuse me before Caesar. So I thought it would be a good idea to talk to these Jews from Rome myself.

Well, they were interested at first. “We want to hear what you have to say,” they told me. “People everywhere are saying bad things about your religion.”

So I invited them to my house. Many more came than I had expected. What a crowd outside my door!

I explained the kingdom of God to them—that God loves and forgives us because of Jesus. I told them about how God raised Jesus back to life after he had died on the cross. I told them that even Moses—one of their most famous leaders—had long ago believed that God would send a Savior. I pleaded with them to accept God’s love in Jesus.

Pause: How do you suppose the Jewish leaders responded to what Paul said?

Some of them believed what I said about Jesus, but others refused to accept my words. And when I told them that God wants Gentiles in his kingdom too, the Jews got angry. They started arguing with each other and began to leave. So I told them the truth: “God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles—and they will listen!”

While I sit here in Rome, I write letters and talk about Jesus to all who come to visit me. The soldiers who guard me have heard many times about Jesus—and I think they are beginning to believe! I am glad to see many of the Gentiles becoming Christians, even if it makes the Jews angry.

Pray for me, my dear friends. Sometimes I feel very alone. It helps to know that you are praying for me every day. I hope to be released and to visit you soon.

In the love of God,

Your friend,

PAUL

Words from Paul

Romans 1:1-7	1 Corinthians 1:1-2	Galatians 1:1-2
Ephesians 1:1	Philippians 1:1	Colossians 1:1
1 Thessalonians 1:1	2 Thessalonians 1:1	1 Timothy 1:1-2
2 Timothy 1:1-2	Titus	Philemon 1:1-2



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