



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Date: 09.14.25 | Paul Defends the Gospel in Caesarea Part 3 - Caesar and Agrippa
Scripture: Acts 25-26

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- God values all people and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and people are invited to join Him in His work.
- We are to be involved in reaching the nations through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- The church is a fellowship of believers, and we are called to meet together regularly.
- The church is not a place or a building, but rather a community of people who belong to the family of God.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- God values all people---born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths---and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and as we join Him in His work, He uses people to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- We demonstrate honor for God when we respect the earthly authorities God has placed in our lives.
- The church is a community of believers called to gather regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve, encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.
- The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry.



MEMORY VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Over the past few weeks, we've seen how Paul never missed a chance to share his faith in Jesus—even when he was standing in front of powerful rulers. Instead of letting fear stop him, Paul told his story of how he met Jesus and how his life was changed.

Say: Today, we're going to practice telling our own stories. Grab an object from the room to use as our "mic." We'll pass it around, and when it's your turn, share one thing about yourself. Here are some ideas to get you started:

What's your go-to snack or meal?

What's something you love to do in your free time?

What's one thing that always makes you smile?

Keep it real and relaxed—this is just practice in sharing a piece of your story.

As you wrap up, say: See how simple that was? You just told part of your story. Paul did the same thing, but his focus was on sharing how he met Jesus and why his faith mattered. When we open up about what Jesus has done in our lives, we're following Paul's example—and that can impact the people around us in powerful ways.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Important Term to Know for This Lesson:

Festus: the successor of Felix as procurator of Judea ([Acts 24:27](#)). He assumed this office at Nero's appointment in AD 60 and held the office until he died in AD 62.

After two years of imprisonment in Caesarea under Felix ([24:27](#)), Paul's case was brought up again when Felix was replaced by Festus, a governor known for being a more effective administrator. Soon after taking office, Festus traveled to Jerusalem, where the foremost complaint of the religious leaders was about Paul. They asked Festus to transfer Paul back to Jerusalem, but their real motive was to ambush him along the way and kill him ([25:2-3](#)). At first, Festus resisted their request, requiring the Jewish leaders to follow proper legal procedure and travel to Caesarea to present their case against Paul ([25:4-5](#)). When they arrived, Paul's accusers surrounded him with numerous serious charges, but none could be proven ([25:7](#)). Paul firmly denied committing any crime against the law of the Jews, the temple, or Caesar ([25:8](#)).

Festus, desiring to do the Jews a favor, suggested that Paul stand trial in Jerusalem (25:9). But Paul, fearing the governor might hand him over to the Jews, invoked his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar (25:10-11). He made clear that if he had committed a crime worthy of death, he was willing to accept the punishment, but since he was innocent, he had the right to appeal. After conferring with his council of legal advisors, Festus agreed, saying, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go” (25:12). This decision not only protected Paul’s life from the new assassination plot but also advanced God’s plan for him to bear witness in Rome.

Some days later, King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea to pay their respects to the new governor. Festus took the opportunity to explain Paul’s case, admitting that it was not about crimes against Rome but rather disputes concerning Jewish religion and “a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (25:19). Since Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus was holding him until he could be sent to Rome, but he was unsure what charges to write in his report (25:20–21). Agrippa, intrigued by the case, requested to hear Paul himself, and Festus arranged for it the following day (25:22).

The hearing was set with a grand ceremony. Agrippa and Bernice entered the audience hall in royal robes, accompanied by military commanders and the leading men of the city, while Paul was brought in as a prisoner, likely still in chains (25:23). The contrast could not have been sharper: the pomp of earthly power against the humble apostle of Christ. Festus explained to those present that though the Jewish leaders demanded Paul’s execution, he had found nothing worthy of death. Since Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus needed help framing formal charges to send with him (25:24-27).

Agrippa permitted Paul to speak, and Paul stretched out his hand in respect, beginning his defense (26:1). He considered it a privilege to stand before Agrippa, who was well-acquainted with Jewish customs and controversies (26:2-3). Paul described his life as a Pharisee, trained in the strictest traditions of Judaism, and emphasized that his hope was the same as that of their twelve tribes—the promise of the resurrection of the dead (26:4-8). He admitted that he had once opposed Jesus, persecuting believers, imprisoning them, voting for their deaths, and even traveling outside Judea to hunt them down (26:9-11).

Paul then recounted the turning point of his life: while on the road to Damascus with authority from the chief priests, he saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun and heard a voice speaking in Hebrew, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (26:14). When Paul asked who was speaking, the Lord answered, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (26:15). If Jesus was speaking, then He was alive, and if He was alive, He truly was the Messiah. Jesus commissioned Paul to be His servant and witness, sending him to both Jews and Gentiles to open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they might receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those sanctified by faith (26:16-18).

Paul explained that he was obedient to this heavenly vision, preaching first in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and Judea, and later to the Gentiles, that people should repent, turn to God, and live changed lives that reflected true faith (26:19-20). Because of this, some Jews

had seized him in the temple and tried to kill him (26:21). But Paul insisted that his message was consistent with the Law and the Prophets: that the Messiah would suffer, rise from the dead, and bring light to both Jews and Gentiles (26:22-23).

At this point, Festus interrupted loudly, accusing Paul of being out of his mind due to excessive knowledge (26:24). Paul respectfully denied the accusation, affirming that his words were true and rational. He then appealed directly to Agrippa, saying that the king knew these things, since none of it had happened in secret, and surely Agrippa believed the prophets (26:25-27). Agrippa replied with a mix of sarcasm and unease, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” (26:28). Paul answered with boldness and sincerity: whether in a short time or a long time, he wished that everyone present might become like him—free in Christ—except for his chains (26:29).

The hearing ended, and Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, and the others withdrew to discuss the case. They all agreed that Paul had done nothing deserving death or imprisonment. Agrippa remarked, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (26:32). Yet Paul’s appeal was part of God’s sovereign plan. Though his circumstances seemed dark and drawn out, Paul never wavered in his testimony about Christ and the resurrection. Having borne witness before rulers and kings, he was now prepared for the final stage of his journey: to proclaim the gospel in Rome, just as the Lord had promised (cf. Acts 9:15).

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY

Remind your group that we are studying the New Testament. Throughout the book of Acts, Paul traveled on missionary journeys, sharing the Gospel and helping to gather groups of new believers into the first churches. Toward the end of the book, Paul spent a lot of time defending the Gospel and the work of Christ in his own life in various settings and before an array of civil leaders.



TELL THE STORY - Acts 25-26

Paul had narrowly escaped death in Jerusalem. The Jews planned to kill Paul, but the Roman soldiers took him to Caesarea, where he would be safe. However, Paul was still a prisoner. The Roman leaders wanted to figure out why the Jews hated Paul so much. Paul met with the rulers to try to explain what was happening.

First, Paul met with Felix, the governor. Paul talked about faith in Jesus. He explained that one day God is going to judge the world. Felix was afraid of what Paul said. He sent Paul away, but he met with him many times for the next two years. When a new governor came to power, Felix did not release Paul from prison.

The new governor was named Festus. He traveled to Jerusalem to meet with Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders asked Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They were still planning to attack Paul and kill him. Festus wanted Paul to stay in Caesarea. He invited some of the Jewish leaders to go with him to see Paul.

Paul stood before Festus. "I haven't done anything wrong," Paul explained again. "I want to see Caesar!" Caesar was the emperor of Rome, and as a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to take his case to him. Festus agreed.

While Paul was waiting to go to Rome, King Agrippa and Queen Bernice visited Festus and Paul. Paul told the king how he became a believer. He explained that Jesus died and rose again to bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles. "You are out of your mind!" Festus said.

Paul said, "I am speaking the truth. I wish you- and everyone who is listening- might believe in Jesus."

King Agrippa, Festus, and the others with them got up. They agreed that Paul had done nothing wrong. The king was ready to release Paul, but Paul had already requested to be taken to Rome.



RETELL THE STORY

Have students re-tell the story as best they can.



SHARE THE GOSPEL

God chose Paul to take the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. Paul met with people again and again to tell the good news about Jesus. He wanted everyone to believe that Jesus is Lord. Because Jesus has the power to save people from sin, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to share the gospel.

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

1. Who was the new governor who replaced Felix? (Festus – [Acts 25:1](#))
2. What did the Jewish leaders ask Festus to do with Paul? (To bring Paul to Jerusalem – [Acts 25:3](#))
3. Why did Paul appeal to Caesar instead of going back to Jerusalem? (He knew the Jews were plotting against him, and he wanted a fair trial – [Acts 25:10-11](#))
4. Who came to visit Festus while Paul was in prison? (King Agrippa and Bernice – [Acts 25:13](#))
5. Why did Festus ask Agrippa to listen to Paul? (He didn't know how to write up the charges against Paul for Caesar – [Acts 25:25-27](#))
6. How did Paul show respect when he began speaking to King Agrippa? (He stretched out his hand and politely asked to defend himself – [Acts 26:-3](#))
7. What did Paul say about his life before knowing Jesus? (He followed the strictest Jewish laws and persecuted Christians – [Acts 26:4-11](#))
8. What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus? (He saw a bright light, fell to the ground, and heard Jesus speak – [Acts 26:13-15](#))
9. What mission did Jesus give Paul that day? (To be a servant and witness, to open people's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light – [Acts 26:16-18](#))
10. How did Paul obey Jesus after this vision? (He preached to Jews and Gentiles about repentance and faith in Christ – [Acts 26:19-23](#))
11. What did Festus say when Paul talked about Jesus rising from the dead? ("You are out of your mind!" – [Acts 26:24](#))
12. How did Paul answer Festus? (He said his words were true and reasonable – [Acts 26:25](#))
13. What did Paul ask King Agrippa directly? (If he believed the prophets – [Acts 26:27](#))
14. How did Agrippa respond? ("Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" – [Acts 26:28](#))
15. What was Paul's bold reply? (He wished that everyone listening would become like him, except for the chains – [Acts 26:29](#))
16. What did Agrippa and Festus agree about Paul after the trial? (He had done nothing wrong and could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar – [Acts 26:31-32](#))
17. Paul shared his story about how Jesus changed his life. How do you think your story about following Jesus could help others?

18. Paul was bold to talk about Jesus even to powerful leaders. When is it hard for you to be bold about your faith?
19. Paul said he wanted everyone listening to become like him, except for the chains. What does that teach us about his heart for others?
20. If you were standing before a king or important leader, what would you want to say about your faith in Jesus?

Paul had the opportunity to share the gospel with Festus, King Agrippa, and Queen Bernice. While he shared with King Agrippa, who did Paul say helped him? (Acts 26:22-23). Paul knew that his help came from the Lord. He was confident in his calling to share the gospel with those who had not heard and continued to share even while under arrest. Paul trusted God to take care of him, and God was faithful to do so. Paul was innocent of any crime. He was passed from one ruler to the next without finding freedom. Festus even mocked Paul and said he was out of his mind. Yet, Paul never stopped telling people about the life-saving and life-changing truth of the gospel.

Paul shared the gospel with his enemies and even those in authority over him. Would this be difficult for you? Why? Paul's boldness and love for others came from the Holy Spirit within him. The grace of God had changed Paul, allowing him to see that anyone, even our enemies, can be saved. Paul was once an enemy of the church, but now risked his life for Jesus.

What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?

What does the story teach me about myself?

Are there any commands in this story that we need to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?

Are there any promises in this story that we need to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

How does this story help me live on mission?

PRAYER PROMPTS

Dear God, thank You for giving Paul courage to tell others about Jesus. Please help me be brave to share my faith with my friends, family, and anyone You put in my life. Give me the words to say and a heart that loves others like You do. Amen.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - God is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD ➡

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD ➡➡

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?