

Acts 23

The Plot Against Paul

Scripture: Acts 23

Memory Verse: Philippians 4:4 *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”*

Lesson Focus: While we have seen Paul faithfully give his testimony and defense of the gospel, sadly we will see today how it only enrages the opposition even more. Yet, even when it seems like Paul was finally about to get “knocked out”, we see the Lord Jesus Himself step in and not only encourage Paul but rescue him! We hope the kids will also be encouraged to draw closer to Jesus in whatever challenges they are facing.

Activities and Crafts: Angry Mob Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Find the Treasure Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st/2nd Grade: Door Hanger

Starter Activity: Knockout Game

Consider getting the lesson going with a game of “knockout”. There are a lot of ways you can play this.

For the 1st and 2nd grade classes, I recommend playing it with dice. Divide the class up into two teams and have them form two single-file lines. The two kids at the front of each line will each be given a dice to roll. The higher roll wins and that kid “stays in” and goes to the back of his line while the kid with the lower roll is “knocked out”. That kid will then sit down next to his team and cheer them on. Then the next two kids in line roll and it continues on until one team has been completely knocked out. The team that still has kids in line wins! If the kids roll a tie, you could either have them both get knocked out or have them both stay in and go to the back. Or you could also have the kids each roll two dice and if they roll “doubles” and win they can select a kid that is knocked out to come back in line. Lots of other variations are possible! We will provide you with dice in your class. * Make it fun and make sure you remind the kids before play that they WILL encourage each other and be good sports (win or lose)!

For 3rd-5th grade classes, we will plan to use the basketball hoops to play some basketball “knockout”. I recommend taking one or two boy and girl volunteers from each grade. Make sure you explain the rules before playing. Find a video that explains it [here](#).

After playing your “knockout” game, transition into the lesson by reminding the kids about where we are in the book of Acts. Paul is in Jerusalem where he has been arrested. We saw last week that he gave a defense of his faith in Jesus Christ to a very angry crowd. What we are going to see this week is that this crowd gets so mad they will do whatever it takes to “knock Paul out” for good! Let’s see what happens next!

Bible Study:

Acts 23:1-9: These verses capture how the unbelieving Jewish crowd before whom Paul gave his defense essentially boils over into an uncontrollable rage! (**Teachers:** I recommend summarizing these verses and beginning reading the text in v. 10) *

Acts 23:10: Wow! The mob is so angry that they want to “tear him to pieces”! (**Teachers:** Consider bringing in a prop you can tear and invite a volunteer up to pretend to be really mad and tear it to pieces!) * The Roman commander realizes how grave a danger Paul is in and sends soldiers in to rescue him from the mob.

Before we continue, let’s make sure we understand what Paul has done to stir up these people so violently!

Q: Has Paul hurt or done anything wrong to anyone? NO!

Q: Has Paul broken any laws that would demand him to be punished? NO!

Q: What then? A: It’s merely his faith and trust in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection for sinners that has brought this on. AND it is how Jesus’s offer of forgiveness and eternal life is for EVERYONE * (even Gentiles) that angers these folks so much. *

Acts 23:11: I can only imagine how discouraged Paul was after giving his defense of the gospel and why he is a follower of Jesus for it only to make the situation worse! How comforting our Lord and Savior is to “stand by” * Paul in what was most certainly a bumner moment for him. *

Q: What did Jesus say to him? A: Be of good cheer or do not fear! * And Jesus even tells him what is ahead, that he will continue to give his defense of the gospel in Rome, the capital of the Roman empire! *

Read Luke 6:22-23 which are the words of Jesus. Perhaps His encouragement to Paul was to remind him that in the midst of all of this hardship and rejection he is still under the lovingkindness and blessing of God!

This also sets the stage for the rest of the book of Acts. The remaining few chapters we have left will chronicle Paul’s hard journey to Rome.

Acts 23:12: Wow! This is intense hatred and anger.

Q: What does it mean when it says they bound themselves under an oath?

A: They are “solemnly swearing” that they will not eat or drink anything until Paul is “knocked out” for good! *

Acts 23:13: Forty men were part of this conspiracy.

Q: Do you know what a conspiracy is?

A: It is a secret plan or scheme to do something wrong or harmful. *

Acts 23:14-15: Paul was safe in the barracks so they concocted a way with the chief priests to get him out so that they could ambush him. This doesn’t look good for Paul! *

Q: But who is on Paul’s side? A: Jesus!

Acts 23:16: God appears to appoint a young member of Paul's family to save the day! He somehow gets word of this conspiracy and as family is able to visit Paul in prison and inform him of the plot. * We don't know how old he was, but I would like to think he was a young person like you!

Acts 23:17-19: And Paul requests that the centurion bring him to the commander so that he can be made aware of this plot.

Acts 23:20-22: This young lad was pretty brave to get himself entangled in all of this! He certainly did a good deed to try and protect his uncle from these lunatics who would rather starve themselves to death than let Paul live! *

Acts 23:23-24: Wow! The Roman commander has seen just how crazy mad these people are who want to knock Paul out so he essentially appoints an army to escort Paul safely out of Jerusalem in the middle of the night to another city!

Q: How many soldiers? A: 200! Q: How many horsemen? A: 70!

Q: How many spearmen? A: 200! That's almost 500 trained people that need to be called upon in the middle of the night just to get one person safely out of the city!

Q: Remember: Who is on Paul's side? A: Jesus! Jesus said that Paul will get to Rome to preach the gospel so it WILL happen, even if it takes an army to get him there!

Acts 23:25-30: Felix was the governor of the larger area and will need some explanation for why one prisoner needed such an entourage to accompany him. Therefore, the commander writes him a letter summarizing the situation. *

Acts 23:31: And just like that, Paul escapes the plot of the Jews and is on his way towards Rome!

Q: Who won this round of "knockout"? A: Paul did, with Jesus's help of course!

Q: Do you think the guys who swore that oath to starve themselves actually did so? Just imagine the temper tantrum they had when they woke up the next morning to discover that Paul was moved out of the city! *

Acts 23:32-35: So, while Paul escaped this foul plot of the Jews, he is not really a free man either. He is still under arrest and now appears before the governor Felix. And this is the state Paul will be in all the way to Rome as we continue in this book!

Key Point: Let's wrap this all up by re-reading what Jesus said to Paul back in v. 11. Jesus told Paul to "*Be of good cheer*". While God was faithful to rescue him, he is still a prisoner. Things are still hard! *

Q: How do you think Paul was able to "*be of good cheer*" despite all of this?

A: I suspect him knowing that Jesus was right there with him changed everything! *

Right around this time he would write a letter to the church at Philippi where he would tell them to rejoice in the Lord **ALWAYS!** (**Phil. 4:4**)

Q: Are you going through a hard time right now? Draw near to your Lord and Savior just like Paul did! Don't let whatever that is "knock you out"! Talk to a leader and let's pray!

