

date: **8/13/17**

Bible Passage: Acts 27—28
(Paul in Rome)

God Calls Us to Life with Him

REMEMBER VERSE

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

“Your bag can weigh only up to five pounds,” our missions leader reminded us. For an awkward teenager, the thought of wearing the same clothes for a week wasn’t comforting. After we landed in Hooper Bay, Alaska, our hosts never showed up, so we walked several miles into town. At least we didn’t have heavy bags to carry.

Before long, some of our new neighbors asked us to join them in a basketball game. I had vowed not to sweat during the course of this trip because of my lack of clean clothing, but I couldn’t resist a good game. So I jumped into the game and was soaked in less than a minute.

It was the best decision I could have made. After that, I was free to stop caring about my clothes or my hair as I found joy in God’s creation and in His people. I was no longer wrapped up in my appearance. Instead, I became overwhelmed by the sense that God loved me—sweat, stink, and all.

When I think about it now, I wish more missions trips required participants to pack five pounds or less. Maybe for every pound of stuff we shed, God can reveal a bit more about our identity as His children. When we answer God’s call to life with Him, He frees us from our own ideas about identity. He releases us to live in the freedom of our true identity found only in Him.

Jeff Given

Presbyterian Church of the Master

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage



God called the apostle Paul to a life of sacrifice. In order to take up his new identity in Christ, Paul would no longer cling to his worldly identity as a Pharisee, a man from Tarsus, and a Roman citizen—three titles that carried a lot of status in his day.

Paul was a Pharisee, and Pharisees were some of the most revered men in Jewish society. In fact, the word *Pharisee* means “set apart.” Paul received his Pharisaic training from a famous rabbi in his time, a man named Gamaliel, who was given a title only seven Jewish teachers received: Rabban.

Paul was also from Tarsus, a prominent Greek city that dated all the way back to the second millennium BC. Tarsus was a prime location for trade and commerce as well as a widely known center of excellence in philosophy and literature.

In addition, Paul was born a Roman citizen. Citizenship was coveted during Paul’s time because Rome was a powerful empire. Citizenship allowed one to travel without restraint, gave one the right to vote, and exempted one from the death penalty (except in cases of treason).

But Paul considered all of these titles insignificant in comparison to the new identity he found in Christ. He proclaimed that he “became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace” (Ephesians 3:7). Paul gloried in his new identity as a child of God.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

God calls us to a radical life lived for Him. Each day this week, before you walk out of your house, take time to fully release your day to God. Ask Him to open your eyes and your heart to situations where He can work through you for His glory. Pray your identity would be fully absorbed into His calling by asking Him questions such as “Where in my life am I living fully in my identity as Your child?” and “Where am I not?” Ask God to show you how to deny yourself in order to take up your cross and follow Him.

Pray also God will fill your kids from the inside out. Pray that their identity will be fully aligned with Him and that they will jump to answer His call to life with Him.

SMALL GROUP
SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s portion of The Big God Story.



Tied Up

While Paul was under house arrest, he was chained to a guard. In this activity, children will discover the challenge of completing a task while tied to another person.

SUPPLIES

- Ribbon or string (approx. 12" per child)
- Scissors
- Games or crafts that require 2 hands (1 activity for every 2 children)

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut the ribbon or string into pieces approximately 12 inches long. Cut one piece for every two children.

RELATE

Paul lived a life based on faith. But much of his life was challenging. For instance, he spent a lot of his time in jail. Today we'll see how he was chained with a Roman soldier guarding him—and some think Paul was chained to the soldier! It was probably difficult and even awkward most of the time. But it never seemed to stop Paul from spreading God's Word.

As the children arrive today, ask them to pair up. Once they've paired up, loosely tie each pair together by one wrist with a ribbon or string. Then have the kids try to play a game or do another activity while bound together. The children will soon realize how challenging this can be!

LARGE GROUP SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.



Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Connect

Question

Would you rather sail across the ocean or hike through a jungle? Why?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Acts 27—28

Storytelling Technique: Props and Images

God Calls Us to Life with Him

SUPPLIES

- Optional: [Storytelling video](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline animation](#) (see Resources)
- Images: [Ancient World Map](#), [Rome](#), [Ship](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Personal letter or card belonging to the Storyteller
- Envelopes (4, letter-sized)
- Marker
- Paper (1 sheet)

SET UP

Using the marker, write each of the following words on an envelope: “Ephesians,” “Philippians,” “Colossians,” and “Romans.” Write Romans 12:1 (the entire verse) in large letters on the sheet of paper, and then fold it and place it in the Romans envelope. Fold in the flap of each envelope so it looks sealed. Optional: If the envelopes become transparent with stage lights on them, fold and place a sheet of paper inside each envelope before closing it. Place the envelopes onstage along with the personal letter or card.

RELATE

Enter carrying a personal letter or card you recently received or are about to send. Read a sentence or two from the letter out loud. **I love getting mail! Did you know that some of the books of the Bible are actually letters? That’s right! Paul wrote 13 letters that we have in our Bibles.** Thumb through your Bible and point out some of Paul’s letters. **Last week we heard about a letter Paul wrote to the people in Ephesus. We call this letter the book of Ephesians. Before we hear more, let’s pray together.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. Pull out Ephesians envelope and hold it up. *Tech:* Cue [Ancient World Map image](#). Point out Ephesus.

As Paul traveled from town to town telling people about Jesus, he went through some difficult things. He got arrested for preaching the gospel and even run out of town by an angry mob! But no matter what came his way, Paul chose to trust God and obey Him. Paul trusted God to give him everything he needed to go wherever God called him. Today let’s hear how God gave Paul the strength to get through



another difficult time.

Tech: Cue Rome image. It seems clear that in the midst of his travels, Paul felt that he should go to Rome, the most important city in the Roman Empire, to tell the emperor the good news of Jesus. At this time, Paul was a Roman prisoner (because he had been arrested for sharing the gospel) and was handed over to a centurion, a Roman military leader. This Roman leader found a ship sailing to Italy, so he and Paul got on board and headed for Rome, where Paul was supposed to be put on trial before the emperor. *Tech: Cue Ship image.*

What do you think happened while the ship was at sea? Invite responses. **Yes. The winds started blowing furiously and churned the waters. The men on board were terrified that they would die!** Invite children to turn in their Bibles to Acts 27:24 and follow along. **But Paul reassured the men that they would reach Rome safely because God had told Paul this!** Paul gathered the men together and told them God had “graciously given [Paul] the lives of all who sail[ed] with [him]” (v. 24).

After a few days of getting tossed around by the stormy sea, the sailors sensed they were close to land and decided to try to make it there alive. Invite kids to go to verse 39 and follow along as you read verses 39–44. **Paul knew God would keep His word. And, sure enough, the ship ran onto an island, and everyone survived!**

After about three months of living on that island, Paul finally set sail to Rome. Invite the kids to turn to Acts 28:16. **Once he arrived in Rome, “Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him” (v. 16). While waiting for his trial with the emperor, Paul spent the whole time in chains. Do you think that kept him from telling anyone about God?** Invite responses. **Of course not!**

God’s Spirit gave Paul the strength and power to keep telling people about Jesus the whole time Paul lived in Rome. First, Paul brought together the Jewish leaders in the city and preached to them in his house, trying “to persuade them about Jesus” (v. 23). God also inspired Paul to write letters to the Jesus-followers in Philippi, Ephesus, and Colossae. *Tech: Cue Ancient World Map image.* Point out these places. **His letters became books in the Bible titled Philippians, Ephesians, and Colossians!** Pull out these envelopes and show them to the kids. Invite them to turn to verses 30–31. **Acts 28:30–31 says, “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

When we trust and obey Jesus, we begin a relationship with God. Life with God requires faith! Think about Paul’s life—arrested, mocked, chased, and shipwrecked. But God allowed Paul to preach the good news of Jesus in some of the most important cities in the Roman Empire! It wasn’t always easy, but Paul knew that he belonged to God and that God would give him everything he needed to live his life for God, no matter where God might lead him.

In fact, Paul wrote about this in his letter to the Romans. Pull out Romans envelope and invite kids to follow along in their Bibles as you read Romans 12:1 from the sheet of paper. Share a story about a time God called you to step out in faith as you followed Him.

Through Jesus we’ve been forgiven, adopted into God’s family, given the gift of eternal life, and blessed with a relationship with God. How will we choose to respond to God, the One who loves us so deeply and calls us to a life with Him?

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Calls Us to Life with Him

Encourage kids to look up the following verses in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **What is faith?** Hebrews 11:1
- **What is something you've done that required faith?**
- **What are some of the things that happened to Paul as he followed God's call to tell the world about Jesus?** Acts 27:23–26; 28:1, 11, 16, 30
- **Why was Paul telling everyone about Jesus?** Romans 1:16; 10:13–14

Questions for Older Kids

- **What is faith?** Hebrews 11:1
- **What is something you've done that required faith?**
- **Was following God easy or difficult for Paul? Why?** Acts 9:16
- **What are some of the things that happened to Paul as he followed God's call to tell the world about Jesus?** Acts 27:23–26; 28:1, 11, 16, 30
- **Why do you think Paul encouraged the Romans to live their lives as “living sacrifices”?** Romans 12:1
- **Why was Paul telling everyone about Jesus?** Romans 1:16
- **What do you feel like God might be calling you to step out in faith and do?**

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Ephesians 1:3–4:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

May you live by faith as you walk with God. May you see how God wants to use you to grow His kingdom and help others live in their new identity.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.

