



## LESSON 4

## PAUL'S SHIPWRECK

## LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** The Holy Spirit Gives Us Courage

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 27–28

**GOD'S BIG STORY:** Paul—who was eager to share the good news of Jesus with the Roman emperor, Caesar—was imprisoned and taken onto a ship sailing toward Rome. Miraculously, all passengers survive a catastrophic shipwreck.

**WORD OF WONDER:** Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect. —Romans 12:2

## INVITATION

*We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...*

## WHO?

Luke, author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, writes in the first-person voice only in the final chapters of Acts (the “we” passages). Many Bible commentators take this to mean that Luke was a travel companion of Paul and present during these events.

## WHAT?

Paul's elevated status meant that a centurion guarded him. This centurion saved his life, for whereas the other soldiers were planning to kill the prisoners, Paul's guard persuades them to trust the prisoners to swim—requiring that their chains be removed (Acts 27:43).

## WHERE?

When the ship came to rest on the island of Malta (Acts 28:1), it had traveled at least 600 miles from Crete. These are some of the most treacherous waters in the Mediterranean Sea.

## WHEN?

A voyage after the feast of the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9) means the ship was traveling to Rome as late as October, when the dangerous conditions of winter were already threatening. Travel by ship would become outright impossible in only a few short weeks.

## CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

From Luke 8:22–25, we know Jesus has the authority to command the winds and the waves. Like Jesus, who was able to sleep during a storm, Paul calmly urges his companions to eat and await God's deliverance (Acts 27:33–34).

# Curiosity

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

## Welcome Question

### At your start time ...

Warmly welcome kids by name.

When you show sincere interest in a child's life, you invite a relationship. Try asking individual kids what made them happy or sad since you saw them last, and listen carefully to their answers.

When it's time to get rolling, invite several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question:

### Who's the bravest character you've ever seen or read about?

If kids aren't sure who might qualify, suggest they think about heroes in books, on TV shows, or in movies. Ask kids to mingle and share their answers and tell why they nominate the character they chose. If you have younger kids, be sure to read the question for them. Make paper and colored pencils available to kids who would like to draw their answers.

Today we'll meet someone who showed great bravery, but he didn't do it on his own. Let's find out who helped him and who'll help us be brave too. It's time to be curious!

## Curiosity Questions

### I'm curious ...

- What do you think it means to be brave?
- What do you think it means to be courageous?

**Leader Tip:** If needed, help kids understand that bravery is defined by our actions in dangerous or difficult situations. Courage runs deeper—it's the state of our hearts when we depend on God (not just ourselves) for whatever comes next. As Jesus-followers, being courageous means trusting God in every situation, even when we might feel scared.

## Game: Fear Factory

Gather kids in the center of the room. Explain you'll give them a choice between two things that many people are afraid of. Their job is to decide which of the two things they're most afraid of, and they'll move to one side or the other of the room to indicate their decision. Then, at your signal, they'll return to the center of the room again.

As you present choices, indicate which side of the room represents each option. To crank up the fun, you can call out specific ways kids can move to their preferred side of the room: crab walk, hop, slide, slither, dance, skip, gallop, tiptoe, side step.

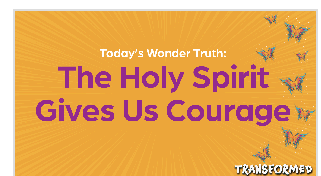
Choices might include the following: snakes/spiders, cockroaches/cough drops, being alone/being in a huge crowd, thunderstorms/blizzards, getting a shot/taking a test, barking dogs/hissing cats, high places/new places, totally dark rooms/loud noises, a dentist visit/an eye exam, getting hurt/hurting others, broccoli/eggplant, floods/tornadoes, falling/floating away, bats/rats, clowns/mosquitoes, otters/orangutans, scorpions/wasps, roller coasters/ice-skating, germs/gyms, being ignored/being the center of attention.

**Leader Tip:** Be sensitive to your kids' experience with fear. For example, if you live in an area that has just experienced a tornado, don't include one in your choices. If you have very young children, they probably haven't been on a roller coaster.

### Make It Inclusive!

Modify this activity for kids with restricted mobility by giving each kid two sheets of paper of different colors. Indicate which color represents which fear choice, and have kids hold up the color that fits their choice.

Gather kids together. **This quick visit to the Fear Factory proves there's no shortage of things that can prompt us to feel fearful. But when that spike of fear strikes, here's something you should know: We're not facing that roller coaster, broccoli, or scorpion alone. The Holy Spirit gives us courage, so even if we're feeling afraid, we can also be brave as we trust in God's power and protection.**



Today's Wonder Truth is **THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US COURAGE.**

## Declaring God's Wonder

**Thank You, God, that You are good!** (Kids repeat.)

**You made me on purpose, for a purpose.** (Kids repeat.)

**And I am Your kid!** (Kids repeat.)

**You know me, love me, and lead me.** (Kids repeat.)

**You know when I'm afraid and You stick with me.** (Kids repeat.)

**The Holy Spirit gives me courage.** (Kids repeat.)

**My life can tell of Your wonder!** (Kids repeat.)

# Faith

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

## Word of Wonder Activity

**WORD OF WONDER:** Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect. —Romans 12:2

Have groups stand facing you. Explain they'll be repeating the Word of Wonder after you, sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase. In the NIV, there are five sentences and, after each of the first four, they'll make a quarter turn to the left. By the fifth sentence they'll again be facing you. During the fifth sentence they'll lift their hands and praise God together as they affirm that His plan is good and pleasing and perfect! The words are printed here, with each place kids will turn indicated.

### Romans 12:2 (NIV):

Don't live the way this world lives. (quarter turn)

Let your way of thinking be completely changed. (quarter turn)

Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. (quarter turn)

And you will agree that what he wants is right. (quarter turn)

His plan is good and pleasing and perfect. (quarter turn)

This "Spin Cycle" activity is more fun—and memorable—if you dash around the room reading the first sentence from the front of the room, the second from the left side of the room, the third from the back of the room, and so on. After a rotation or two ask a willing reader to take your place—and pick up the pace.

## Questions: Younger Kids

- God sent Paul to Rome in an unusual way. What was it?
- Why do you think the sailors and soldiers didn't listen to Paul's warning that their ship would sail into bad weather?
- How did Paul show courage in today's part of God's big story?
- Paul could be courageous because he knew God was with him. How do you know God is with you?
- The Holy Spirit gave Paul courage in a big storm and the courage to tell lots of people about Jesus. How has the Holy Spirit given you courage?

Paul was courageous in the storm, not because he was particularly strong or brave on his own, but because he knew God was with him. All of us face situations that are hard or scary, and we need courage! I'm glad the Holy Spirit gives us courage! Let's thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit and pray for our friends too.

**Leader Tip:** Lots of questions are provided; you don't need to use them all. If kids are digging deeply into a question, making discoveries and learning, pause there. The goal isn't to get through all the material of a lesson, it's to connect kids deeply to God's Word and Jesus. If that's happening, don't be in a rush to move on.

## Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Encourage kids to share prayer requests before praying for one another, praising God for answered prayers, and thanking God for the courage we get from the Holy Spirit. Sharing and praying in small groups may help kids who are shy to speak up and also pray aloud—two very good things!

## Questions: Older Kids

- God helped Paul get to Rome in an unusual way. How did it happen?
- In what ways did Paul show courage in today's part of God's big story?
- Paul was sure of his mission because he asked God what to do and God showed him. How do you go about asking God to guide you?
- God promises He'll be with us, but not that we'll always be physically safe. How do you feel about that?
- Paul's mission was to tell as many people about Jesus as he could. What do you think your mission from God might be? If it's to tell others about Jesus, who do you want to tell?
- The Holy Spirit gave Paul courage during the shipwreck and also as he told people about Jesus. When are some times the Holy Spirit has given you courage?

**Leader Tip:** Some of these questions are difficult and answering them requires kids to be honest with themselves and others. Give kids time and space to think, and assure them it's OK if they aren't ready to share their thoughts out loud.

Paul was courageous in the storm not because he was particularly strong or brave on his own, but because he knew God was with him. All of us face situations that are hard or scary, and we need courage from the Holy Spirit! Let's thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit and pray for our friends too.

## Prayer Time: Older Kids

Ask kids to move apart from one another to minimize distractions. Encourage them to silently thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit. Suggest they ask for courage to live and think as followers of Jesus and that they pray for family and friends too.

# Identity

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

## Responding in Worship: Rocky Shoals

**Leader Tip:** Small, smooth river rocks—about an inch long—are inexpensive and available at landscaping businesses or big-box craft stores.

Gather kids together. Give each kid a small stone to hold.

**Paul's ship ran aground on a shoal, or a shallow area of hidden rocks, sand, and gravel. Those rocks were a surprise to the sailors—and without God's help, all the passengers could have lost their lives.**

**You may run into unexpected situations that are like rocky shoals too. You're sailing along in life and suddenly—wham! A friendship falls apart. Someone you love gets sick. Your parents start fighting. You have to move to a new town.**

Ask kids to cup their hands in front of them, holding the stones in their open palms.

**When that happens, all we might think about is the giant rock threatening to tear us apart. But here's what we can do: we can tell God what we're facing. We can tell Him how we're feeling. And we can ask God to fill us—through the Holy Spirit—with courage. Courage to have faith and to stay strong. Courage to trust that God has a good, perfect, and pleasing plan, even if we don't see what it is.**

**What's a rocky shoal you're facing right now? Maybe it's something that worries you or makes you afraid. Maybe it's something you wish would just go away—but it doesn't. In a moment, I'll play a song. While it's playing softly, close your eyes and tell God what's going on and how you feel about it. And then ask for the courage to face it, knowing He's with you through it all. When the song ends, I'll close in prayer.**

Play “Who You Say I Am” from the [Transformed Elementary Spotify playlist](#).

Close this worship time by thanking God for the courage He gives, and for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Praise Him for His ever-present love.

**The stone you hold is yours to keep and carry in a pocket. Let it remind you that you don't have to fear rocky shoals. The God who loves you is bigger than any problem you face. And the Holy Spirit will give you courage!**

## Blessing Your Kids

**Blessing:** May you live boldly, filled with courage given by the Holy Spirit. And may you stand strong for Jesus, walking with Him always, part of a plan that's good, pleasing, and perfect.



# GAME 1: SWIM TO SHORE!

**Leader Tip:** Use traffic cones or other objects to establish the boundary areas so it's clear when the kids reach "shore."

## Make It Inclusive!

### Tip for Including Kids with Unique Abilities

This game requires movement. If you have kids who can't participate in "swimming" to shore, invite them to be part of the "rocks" in the water.

In this game, kids will attempt to "swim" to safety past various obstacles (sharks and rocks).

Have the kids line up at one end of your space. Designate a large area as "water," and have a clearly marked area on the side of the space opposite kids that represents the "shore." Place several leaders and/or kids in the "water" area and assign half of them to be "rocks" and half of them to be "sharks."

**Oh, no! There's been a shipwreck. You're all on the ship, and you're going to have to swim to shore! But watch out for the sharks** (have the people being "sharks" wave) **and the rocks** (have the people being "rocks" wave). **If you're tagged by a shark, you become a shark and will stay in the water to tag other swimmers. If you bump into a rock, you become part of the rock. Rocks stand still, but sharks can swim anywhere in the water! See if you can make it safely to the shore!**

Invite the rest of the kids to "swim" back and forth until most or all the kids have become sharks or rocks.

**Great swimming, everyone! But not very many of you made it to safety. Uh-oh! However, in God's big story today, Paul was in a shipwreck and did make it to safety—along with everyone on his ship. It must have been scary to be in a shipwreck. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul courage, and with God's help, everyone on the ship was saved.**

## GAME 2: TURN THAT FROWN UPSIDE DOWN

**Leader Tip:** Create variations of this game by changing what the “transformer” does (instead of blinking, suggest nodding or shrugging) and what the “transformed” kids do (instead of smiling they can puff out their cheeks or lift their chins).

### Make It Inclusive!

#### Tip for Including Kids with Unique Abilities

Have everyone in the circle sit in chairs instead of on the floor to be at eye level with kids in wheelchairs or other assistive devices.

In this game, kids will sit in a circle with frowns on their faces until the designated person winks at them, turning the frown into a smile!

Ask the kids to sit on the floor in a circle. **In just a minute, I’m going to pick one of you to be the Transformer. If you’re the Transformer, keep it a secret! Don’t tell anyone! OK. Now close your eyes. I will tap the person on the head who will be our Transformer.**

Walk all the way around the circle and tap one person on the head. Choose a leader or older kid for the first round. **OK, open your eyes. Now it’s time for everyone to frown. Show me your best mad, frowny faces. Look around the circle at other people. The Transformer is going to secretly wink or blink at different people. If the Transformer winks or blinks at you, turn that frown upside down and put a smile on your face! After a few minutes, we will try to figure out who the Transformer is.**

Let the Transformer “transform” a few kids, then stop. **OK. If you’re smiling, you aren’t allowed to answer. For the rest of you, do you know who the Transformer is?** Let kids discuss who they think it might be. If they figure it out, choose a new Transformer and start a new round. If they don’t figure it out, keep going with that Transformer until the kids realize who it is. Play as many rounds as you have time for.

**The Transformer had the power to change you, right? You went from frowning to smiling! During this series, we’re talking about people who are transformed—changed—by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can make a huge difference in our lives, giving us faith, boldness, power, and courage.**