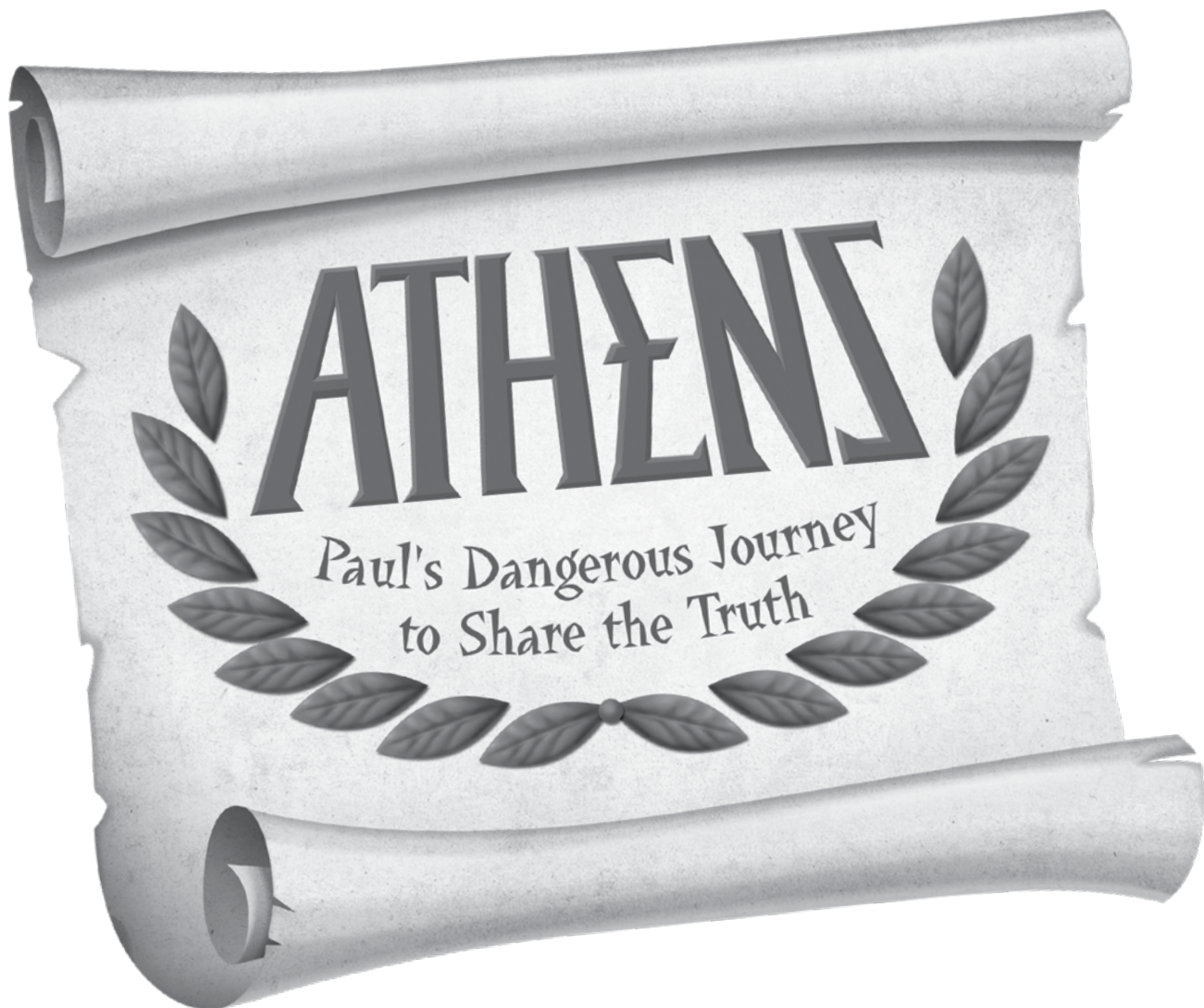


VOLUNTEER

Drama Leader Manual

PAUL'S ADVENTURES





PAUL'S ADVENTURES

DRAMA LEADER MANUAL

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This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:



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Applicable—The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

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PAUL'S ADVENTURES DRAMA LEADER MANUAL

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Credits

A big thanks to our incredible VBS team, who loves sharing God's truth with you and the kids you reach!

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DAY 5

God loves us and wants us to share his love. 33



You'll reinforce Bible learning in a big way because the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each activity. That's why each center is so important to the overall learning experience.

Explore the entire program at a glance. Refer to the chart to see how each center's activities supplement other activities to make the Bible come to life at your church!



DAY 1



DAY 2

BIBLE CONTENT

Bible Point:
God loves us all.

Key Verse:
"The Lord is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his
creation." (Psalm 145:9)

Bible Story:
Paul begins his second missionary
journey. (Acts 15:36-16:5)

Bible Point:
God loves us and takes care of us.

Key Verse:
"Give all your worries and cares to
God, for he cares about you."
(1 Peter 5:7)

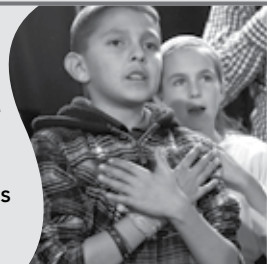
Bible Story:
Paul and Silas are put in prison.
(Acts 16:16-40)

CELEBRATION

- ◆ Learn the Day 1 Bible verse and motions.
- ◆ Meet all the Oikoi at Athens.
- ◆ Sing "Yes, It's True," "Love Round," and "The Love of God."



- ◆ Hear a few God Sightings from the whole group.
- ◆ Learn the Day 2 Bible verse and motions.
- ◆ Sing "Happy Day," "Give All Your Worries to God," and "It Was for Freedom."



OIKOS TIME



Use a Confetti Cannon to explore how God showers them with compassion.



Toss away worries with a Trouble Tosser as they experience what it's like to give their troubles to God.

PAUL'S ADVENTURES

Meet Paul and Dionysius, and receive a piece of candy as they learn that God loves everyone.



Learn about Paul's time in prison, wear handcuffs, and discover that God takes care of them.



ARENA GAMES



Warm up for the Olympics—exercise "brain muscles," stretch arms and legs, and learn about Athens athletics.



Run, race, and relay in all kinds of Olympic events.

Marketplace Shops

Choose a few shops to visit each day:



ANIMAL
COURTYARD



GEOMETRY
SCHOOL



POTTERY
STUDIO



FOOD MARKET



DAY 3



DAY 4



DAY 5

Bible Point:

God loves us when others don't.

Key Verse:

"The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" (Psalm 118:6)

Bible Story:

An angry mob searches for Paul and Silas. (Acts 17:1-9)

Bible Point:

God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus.

Key Verse:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Bible Story:

Paul preaches about Jesus. (Acts 17:16-34)

Bible Point:

God loves us and wants us to share his love.

Key Verse:

"Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." (John 13:34)

Bible Story:

Paul continues his journey. (Acts 18:1-5)

- ◆ Talk about their daily mission in the Marketplace.
- ◆ Learn the Day 3 Bible verse and motions.
- ◆ Sing "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship," "We Will Live Forever," and "Get Up, Get Up."



- ◆ Learn the Day 4 Bible verse and motions.
- ◆ Sing "Untitled Hymn (Come to Jesus)."
- ◆ Review Days 1-3.



- ◆ Learn the Day 5 Bible verse and motions.
- ◆ Hear Oikos cheers.
- ◆ Pray for moms and babies in Zambia.



Experiment with Mad Magnets that show how God sticks with them when others push them away.



Make marks on a Not-So-Perfect Pal, then watch them get wiped away...just like Jesus' death wiped away their sins!



Watch Expando Powder undergo an amazing transformation, exploring how lives are changed when they share God's love.

Run to a darkened room, hide from an angry mob, and learn that God loves them when others don't.



Write sins on colorful Paper Handprints, and place the hands on a cross as they remember that God sent his Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for their sins.



Practice sharing God's love, review their time with Paul, and receive an encouraging farewell letter.



Test their skill with a discus, javelin, and hoop.



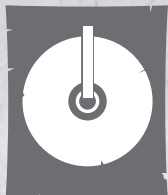
Hop and jump in exciting Olympic events.



Gallop like horses, and take on a chariot challenge.



OLYMPIC SHOP



LAW COURT



TOY-MAKING SHOP



SCRIBE SHOP



MUSIC SHOP




OPERATION KID-TO-KID™

DAY 1

DAILY SCHEDULE

BIBLE POINT: God loves us all.

BIBLE STORY: Paul begins his second missionary journey. (Acts 15:36–16:5)

 TIME	GROUP A Oikoi <u>Antioch</u> <u>Ephesus</u>	GROUP B Oikoi <u>Berea</u> <u>Galatia</u>	GROUP C Oikoi <u>Colossae</u> <u>Iconium</u>	GROUP D Oikoi <u>Corinth</u> <u>Lystra</u>
6:00–6:15	Celebration	Celebration	Celebration	Celebration
6:15–6:30	Oikos Time	Oikos Time	Oikos Time	Oikos Time
6:30–6:45	Paul's Adventures	Arena Games	Visit Marketplace	
6:45–7:00	Arena Games	Paul's Adventures		
7:00–7:15	Visit Marketplace		Paul's Adventures	Arena Games
7:15–7:30			Arena Games	Paul's Adventures
7:30–7:45	Oikos Time	Oikos Time	Oikos Time	Oikos Time
7:45–8:00	Celebration	Celebration	Celebration	Celebration

TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Paul's Adventures

Welcome!

We're glad you've joined the staff of this exciting Holy Land Adventure! During this event, families will explore the culture of ancient Athens, where Paul visited during his second missionary journey. As Paul, you'll give insider details about what it was like to spread the Gospel throughout parts of Asia and Europe—a journey lasting three years and spanning 2800 miles!

You'll help children and adults understand what Paul endured to tell people about Jesus—danger, beatings, jail, threats, ridicule—not to mention the sheer hardship of Bible-times travel. But with God's help, Paul and his friends were able to spread the Good News about Jesus to a world that so desperately needed to hear it. A world much like ours. Kids and adults will walk away with the encouragement of knowing that God is always with them and loves them without measure—just as he did Paul.

Families will spend 15 minutes visiting with Paul (that's you!) and listening to him share insights about his adventures.

What You'll Do

Smile! As Paul, your hospitality should make families feel warmly welcomed. Engage families in conversation, as if they're truly guests in your home.

Dig into your role. Imagine being so completely committed to Jesus that you spend *all* of your time, talents, and finances in an effort to tell others about him. You travel, often by foot, wherever the Lord leads you. You're beaten, hunted, and thrown into prison. You're ridiculed, harassed, and mocked. Some people even want to kill you because of your vocal faith in Jesus. Would you continue to talk about Jesus? Would you still believe but keep your faith to yourself? Or would you finally give up?

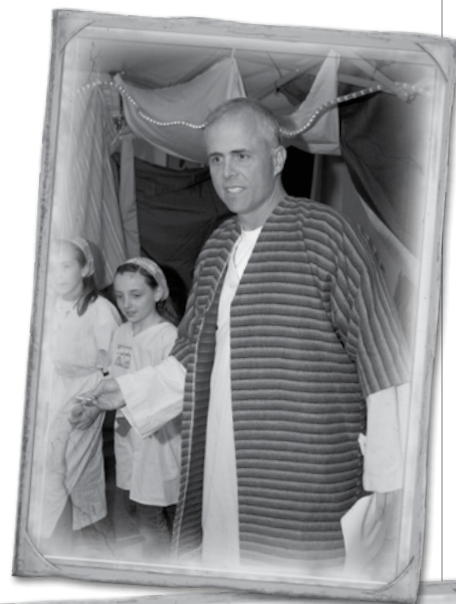
Paul was willing to risk everything he had—everything he was—to share the Good News of Jesus' love, resurrection, and offer of salvation. He endured unbelievable dangers and hardship. But he never quit. Never gave up. He knew how very much God loves us—enough to send his only Son to take the punishment for our sins. Enough to offer a way to spend eternity with him. And Paul just *had* to share that news with as many people as he could.

Be prepared. It's important for you to know and understand what you'll cover, since it connects to what is said and done in other areas of the program. Practice your script several times with the person playing Dionysius so you both feel comfortable with your lines.

Be consistent. It's important that you're available to be at every session of Athens VBS.

What's an Oikos?

Oikos (pronounced "OY-koss") is the Greek term for "household" or "family." The plural is "oikoi" and is pronounced "OY-koy." At Athens VBS, an Oikos is a group of up to 10 kids and adults led by an Oikos Leader and an Assistant Oikos Leader. We've named each Oikos after one of the early churches Paul visited.



Did You Know?

During the classical period of ancient Greece (508-322 B.C.), Athens was a cultural center for the arts, learning, and philosophy. It's where Socrates was born, as well as Plato, Sophocles, Euripides, and many others. Athens is still considered the birthplace of democracy.



Creating the ENVIRONMENT



Costumes

Considered the first true missionary, Paul probably spent much of his travels on foot, on a ship, or presumably on a horse or donkey. When he stayed any length of time in one place, he often worked at his trade of tentmaker. A Bible-times tunic, belt or sash, and sandals will work well for Paul's costume—nothing fancy needed!

Dionysius was a member of the council in Athens, which at the time of Paul's visit dealt mostly with educational and religious matters. So Dionysius can be dressed similarly to you but perhaps a little "spiffier." (Remember, although Athens had declined in importance, it was still considered a center of philosophy, culture, and art.)



You may want to call local churches and see about borrowing several good-quality Bible-times costumes. Or visit group.com/vbs and find tunics or a Bible-times costume pattern pack.

Paul's Tent-Making House

First, find a room that will comfortably accommodate one-quarter of the total Oikoi. If possible, find a place that's quiet and removed from the bustle and noise of the Marketplace and the games area.

Then transform your space into a Bible-times house set up for tent making, Paul's traditional occupation. The easiest way to decorate is to use a pop-up tent canopy, and hang cloth from the ceiling to create plain walls. This also helps everyone use their imaginations, since they're not distracted by modern-looking bulletin boards, white boards, posters, and furniture.

Advice Column

One-quarter of the Oikoi (groups of about 10 people) will visit with you at a time. For example, if you have 120 people at your Athens VBS, 30 of them will come to visit at one time. Check with your Director to see how many people you should prepare for at each rotation.

If you can't move furniture, hide it under solid-colored sheets and set large baskets on top. Scatter rugs and pillows on the floor, and fill shelves or tabletops with candles (unlit, of course!), paper scrolls, and rolls of cloth.

Near the entrance, hang a clothesline or set up a wooden clothes hanger. Hang pieces of leather-looking material, plus lengths of rough cloth in varying colors. Add a few coils of thin rope on the floor, a few baskets and some greenery—and your set is set!

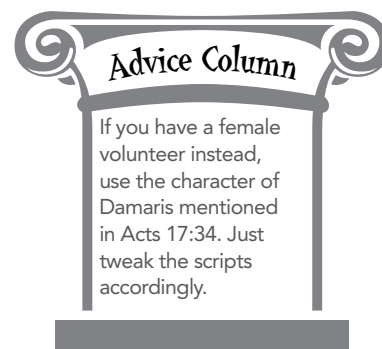
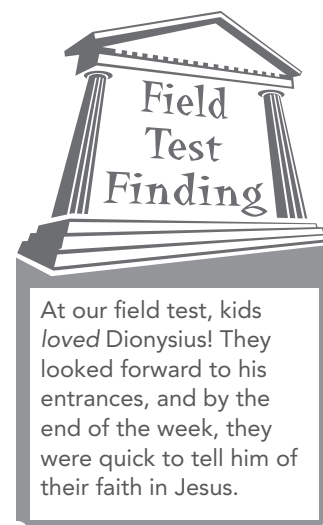
Understanding the Roles

Help the families in your church see Paul as a *real* person—someone who put his life on the line to tell *everyone* about Jesus. Find a hammy male assistant to play Dionysius (pronounced “dye-on-ISS-ee-yus”), a member of the Athens Council who by the end of VBS will become a new believer in Jesus. (Dionysius is a real Bible character—just look at Acts 17:34!) Be sure you and Dionysius understand each character’s personality and role. Practice with Dionysius ahead of time so that his entrances, your dialogue, and his exits can be smooth and natural.

♦ **Paul.** The character of Paul should be passionate about his faith in Jesus. He is also a friendly, tactful, likeable character whom kids and adults enjoy spending time with. In this VBS, Paul doesn’t actually tell about his past anti-Christian life until Day 4—he does allude to it, however. (Don’t spoil the surprise, because it was amazingly impactful when he confessed to kids and adults.) Paul was known for meeting people “where they were.” Especially in Athens, he used listeners’ current knowledge base as a starting place to talk about God and Jesus.

♦ **Dionysius.** After hearing Paul speak, Dionysius became a believer in Jesus. (The Bible doesn’t tell us how many people Paul influenced in Athens—just that “some joined him and became believers.”) Until then, though, Dionysius acts as the voice of tolerance in Athens. To him, all gods are the same, and it really doesn’t matter what you believe. (Sound familiar? It’s what lots of kids—and adults—are surrounded with today!) Dionysius was a member of the Council, which means that he was a full citizen—at least 30 years old—in good standing. Some sources also say that Dionysius was a member of the elite. (Council members were chosen randomly from the larger Assembly. They were charged with suggesting new laws to the Assembly and making sure the everyday functions of Athens, such as street repair and ship building, were running smoothly.)

As Dionysius, you’re proud of your role in the Council. You dress well and are educated and well-spoken. But until the last day of VBS, you aren’t concerned with Jesus and think Paul is being rather narrow-minded in his faith. After all, what does it matter what someone believes? In past Holy Land Adventure programs, this kind of character has provided some of the most powerful, memorable moments in the entire program!



Supplies

All Week

- ☐ simple Bible-times costumes for Paul and Dionysius
- ☐ cloth to cover walls and to drape from ceiling
- ☐ clothesline or drying frame to hang tent material on
- ☐ large pieces of "leather" and rough cloth to hang on clothesline or frame
- ☐ Bible-times accessories such as rugs, baskets, and greenery

Day 1

- ☐ individually wrapped mini candy bars
- ☐ basket for holding candy
- ☐ photocopy of script for Dionysius

Day 2

- ☐ plastic mesh fencing (used as "handcuffs")
(1 handcuff per participant per rotation, plus a few extra)
- ☐ basket to hold handcuffs
- ☐ small bottles of orange-scented oil (1 per Oikos per rotation)
- ☐ rope lights
- ☐ chain to rattle
- ☐ photocopy of script for Dionysius

Day 3

- ☐ Flicker Lights*
- ☐ basket to hold lights
- ☐ "Angry Mob" sound effect (available at group.com/vbsTools, Athens Tools, Updates/Resources)

Day 4

- ☐ wooden cross about 4 feet high
- ☐ bucket or large basket
- ☐ books or other weights to hold cross upright

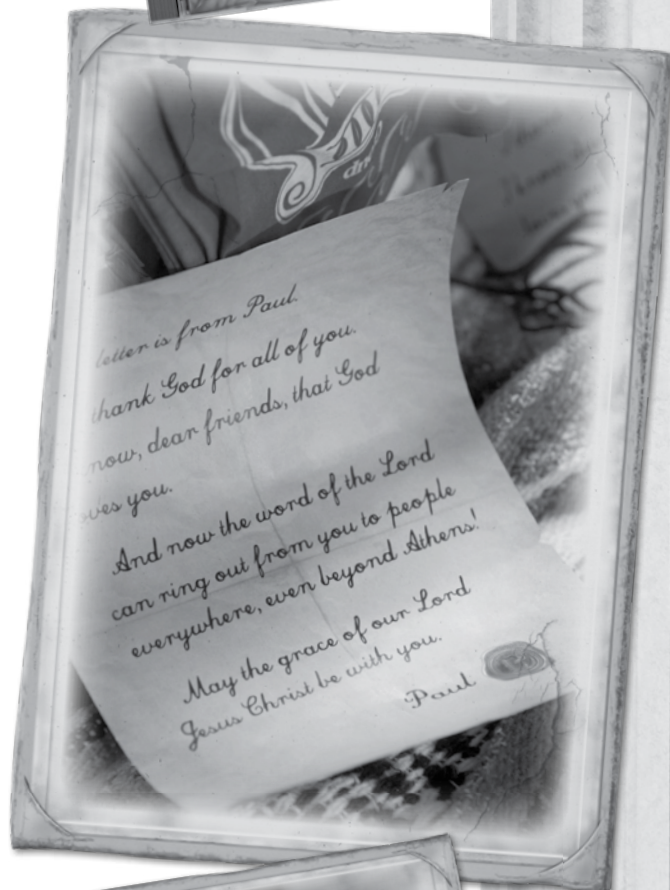


- ☐ brown cloth to cover bucket or basket
- ☐ large Glue Dots*
- ☐ Paper Handprints* (1 per participant)
- ☐ baskets to hold handprints
(1 per Oikos per rotation)
- ☐ markers and crayons
- ☐ rope lights
- ☐ CD player
- ☐ *Celebration Music* CD*
- ☐ scroll (optional)
- ☐ volunteer (optional)

Day 5

- ☐ Letters From Paul (with stickers)* (1 per participant)
- ☐ 2 baskets to hold rolled letters and Flicker Lights
- ☐ Flicker Lights* (1 per participant per rotation)
- ☐ rope lights
- ☐ burlap or old-looking bag for Paul's packing
- ☐ copy of letter from Dionysius on page 36
- ☐ scroll (optional)

* available from Group Publishing
or your Group VBS supplier





DAY 1

Key Verse: “The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.” (Psalm 145:9)

Bible Point: God loves us all.

Why It Matters

Wow, even great heroes of the Bible had troubles with friends! Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement so strong that they parted ways and went on separate missionary trips. It's not uncommon to have problems with relationships—it's part of life, and kids seem to have more than their share of friend issues. (Who hasn't comforted a child devastated by something a “best friend” did?) But God continued to use Paul and Barnabas to further his kingdom. God even sent another young disciple—Timothy—to help Paul during his second missionary journey. Use today's activities to help kids and adults realize that God is in control, and his love is for everyone. He can use each of us, no matter who we are, to accomplish great things for his kingdom.

Bible Story: Paul begins his second missionary journey.
(Acts 15:36–16:5)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem to settle a dispute. Believers in Antioch had been telling Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul and others argued that there was no reason to burden the Gentiles with that yoke because all are saved the same way—“by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11).
- Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch with a letter stating that Gentile believers need not be circumcised. While there, Paul and Barnabas decided to revisit the churches from their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along, but Paul strongly disagreed because John Mark had “deserted” them on the previous trip (Acts 15:38).
- The Bible doesn't say why John Mark failed to finish that trip. Some speculate that he was uncomfortable preaching to Gentiles; others think the trip might have seemed too dangerous. Whatever the reason, Paul was *not* favorably impressed with John Mark's behavior, and his disagreement with Barnabas was so sharp that they parted ways.
- Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus to preach, while Paul and Silas headed to Syria. In Lystra lived a young disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was a Greek. Paul invited Timothy to join them on their journey.
- For the record, we know that Paul got over his disappointment with John Mark. In fact, Paul later asked Timothy to send Mark, saying “for he will be helpful to me in my ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11).

Day 1 Paul's Adventures

Getting Ready

For each group that visits, prepare a basket of small wrapped candy bars—enough for each person to have one.

Give Dionysius his script. Dionysius will meet Oikos groups outside the door to Paul's tent-making house. After Oikoi enter, Dionysius will wait out of sight. He will enter the room when he hears Paul say: *"That's like saying God's love is only for certain people. And that's not true!"*

Dionysius will have the following dialogue with each group of visitors as they approach Paul's tent-making room.

Supplies for Today

- ☐ individually wrapped mini candy bars (1 per participant)
- ☐ basket to hold candy
- ☐ photocopy of script for Dionysius

Meeting Dionysius

(Dionysius paces back and forth in front of the door, essentially blocking the entrance to Paul's house.)

Dionysius: Oh no, are you people here to see Paul too? I need a quick word with him before the next Council meeting. I'm a member of the Council here in Athens—that's a very important job, you know. I don't have time to be running all over Athens looking for Paul. But then again, I *would* like to talk to him.

But I can't wait around all day. I'd better go! Tell him I was here, OK?

(Dionysius hurries off just before Paul comes to the door, closing the door most of the way but leaving it partially open so he can hear his cue to enter.)

Meeting Paul

You (Paul) will greet visitors as they're bunched at the door. Look around as if confused.

Say: I thought I heard my friend Dionysius out here...but I don't see him. Oh well, maybe he'll come back later. In the meantime, come in, come in, my new friends! Welcome to my temporary tent-making house. If you can find a spot, please sit down.

You must be visitors to Athens—so am I. I know you're visitors because I heard you singing praise songs earlier. Most people in Athens don't praise God or Jesus, you know. But I'm here to change that! Because I *love* Jesus, and I want *everyone* to know about him!

Oh, I'm sorry—I haven't even introduced myself yet. My name is Paul. My family is from Tarsus, but I've been traveling for a long while now. Where are you from? Oikos groups can tell Paul the name of their city.



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Advice Column

Encourage Oikos members to sit in knee-to-knee circles on the floor. That way, everyone can hear what other Oikos members say.

Advice Column

Suggest that Oikos leaders answer questions first, giving kids time to think and formulate their own answers. Also remind leaders to give each person a chance to talk. Give a 30-second warning before stopping conversations.

Field Test Finding

We were surprised that about 75 percent of participants said their moms had first told them about Jesus. Way to go, women!

Say: Well, welcome—I'm so glad to meet other Christians. Maybe we can talk while I work. Pick up a piece of cloth, and pretend to examine it as you continue. I'm actually not a full-time tentmaker, but I do try to work at my trade while I travel. What I like to do most of the time is tell people about God! Every day, I wake up and am so amazed that God loves me. Me! It's just incredible. And he loves you, too! In fact, he loves us so much that he sent Jesus to take away our sins. That's why I'm in Athens—to tell people that God loves us all. ("It's true!")

Believe It or Not

Say: I haven't been in Athens very long. Actually I'm just waiting for my friends Silas and Timothy to arrive. They should be here soon.

Timothy's dad is a Greek who doesn't believe in Jesus. But Timothy's mom is a Christian, and so is his grandmother. They're the ones who taught Timothy about Jesus. Ask:

? Who first told you about Jesus? Tell your Oikos Leader.

Say: I listened in, and I heard that many of you said your mom told you about Jesus. That reminds me of my friend Timothy, whom I told you about. He learned about Jesus from his mom, too. Ask:

? Do you know someone who needs to learn about Jesus? Maybe it's someone in your family, like Timothy's dad. Or someone in your school or neighborhood?

Say: It sounds like most of us know people who don't believe in Jesus. In fact, I used to be one of those people. Maybe I'll tell you about that sometime. Let's pray for those people right now, OK? I'll count to 3, and then all together we'll shout out the names of the people who need to learn about Jesus. God can hear all of us at the same time! Ready?

1, 2, 3! Have everyone shout out the names they thought of.

I'm so glad to know that God loves us all. ("It's true!") And because he loves us, he sent his Son, Jesus, to show us that love.

But there are some people—friends of mine, in fact—who think that Jesus came only for the Jews. That he didn't come for everyone. That's like saying God's love is only for certain people. And that's not true!



A Visit from Dionysius

(Dionysius hurries into the room.)

Dionysius: Paul, Paul! There you are! I've been looking for you. There's something we need to talk about!

Paul: *(Tries to quiet Dionysius.)* Hold on, Dionysius. I'm kind of busy here. I was just explaining something important to my new friends.

Dionysius: *(Looks at kids.)* Oh...well...hmm...I do see you have visitors. But in case you've forgotten, I'm a member of the Council. I don't have time to waste. Plus, I think you'll appreciate what I have to say.

Paul: *(Sighs.)* OK, OK, go ahead.

Dionysius: Well, a friend of mine on the Council was talking about you—he apparently heard you in the Marketplace telling people about this Jesus person of yours.

Paul: And?

Dionysius: And...well...how can I say this? He was laughing at you, Paul. Laughing behind your back. I thought you should know so you could stop embarrassing yourself. You know, there's no need to talk about this Jesus—Athens already has plenty of gods to choose from. They're all the same, you know. It doesn't matter who or what you believe in. *(Slaps hands on legs.)* There, I feel better. I figured I'd better tell you so you could stop that silly talk.

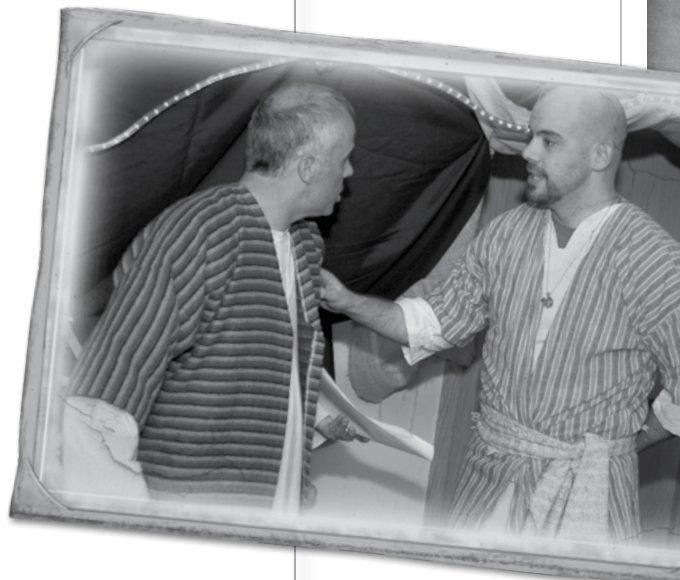
Paul: *(Shakes head and chuckles.)* Dionysius, you don't understand. I don't care if people laugh at me for talking about Jesus. A lot worse has happened to me because of my faith. Listen—Jesus is the most important thing in my life! Nothing will stop me from talking about him. Everyone needs to know about Jesus and God's love, Dionysius. Here, I'll show you what I mean.

Sweet Treats

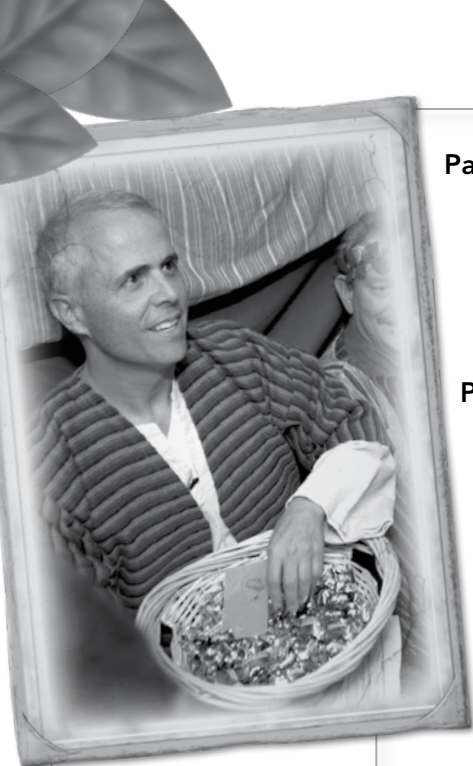
(Paul asks everyone to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a line, then grabs the basket of candy bars and holds up one candy bar.)

Paul: I saw these sweet treats in the Marketplace. I'm not sure what they're called, but I heard they're really good.

Dionysius: Oh, yes, I had those at the symposium. I forget what they're called, but they're great! Can I have one now? Or two? I am a member of the Council, you know.



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Paul: *(Shakes head.)* Please wait your turn, Dionysius. Anyway, let's say that you're all really sick. Show me your best sick pose—grab your stomach, grab your head, stick out your tongue! *(Pauses for everyone to strike a pose.)* OK, freeze!

(Everyone should freeze in their pose.)

Paul: You all *look* horribly sick! But did you know that you *really are* sick? You are! Because of your sins—the wrong things you do—your soul is sick. So is mine. So is everyone's. And the only medicine that can help us is Jesus. He's the only one who can take our sins away.

Now let's pretend that these sweet treats stand for Jesus and his healing power. When I give you a sweet treat, you can come out of your sick pose. And hold onto your sweet—don't eat it yet.

(Paul goes along the line, giving only certain people a candy bar. Makes the distinction that people wearing green, or another color, can't receive a treat. Those not receiving candy stay in their poses.)

Paul: Look at the people who didn't get a sweet treat. They're like the people who don't know Jesus. People without Jesus have no way to get rid of their sins. Their souls are still sick. Now tell me this—you can just call out your answers. *(Asks:)*

? **If you got a piece of candy, how are you feeling right now?**

(Various answers, like: "good"; "happy"; "relieved.")

? **How do you sick people who *didn't* get candy feel about seeing these other people get healed?** *(Various answers: "upset"; "I wish I could be healed"; "sad.")*

Paul: Maybe that's how people who need to hear about Jesus feel. Maybe that's how those people we prayed for when we shouted out their names feel. That's why we need to share the love of Jesus with everyone! OK, you can all come out of your poses. Go ahead and sit with your Oikos.

(Turns to Dionysius.) So what do you think, Dionysius? Did you learn anything?

Dionysius: Yes. Yes, I did! I learned I like candy! As for Jesus, I still think you're being a little narrow-minded, Paul. Why is Jesus any better than all the gods in Athens? But I promise I'll think about what you said. At the moment, I'm late for the Council. I gotta run. I'll see you soon, Paul! Oh, and you people too.

(Starts to run out of the room, then hesitates.) I'd better take a few of these—it could be a long meeting. *(Grabs a handful of candy and runs from the room.)*



A Fair Farewell

Say: Well, I hope Dionysius learns that God loves us all. ("It's true!") That's why he sent Jesus. And that's why I want to tell everyone about Jesus!

You know, I'd better go see if my friends Timothy and Silas are here yet. I hope you'll come back to see me tomorrow. I have so much more to tell you about Jesus and God's love.

Take the basket of candy with you as you move to the door. Oh, and anyone who didn't get a sweet treat can take one on the way out. Your Oikos Leader can decide when you should eat them. Maybe you could even take them home and tell your families about Jesus!

Give candy to those who didn't already receive any. Give participants high fives as they leave, and invite them back tomorrow.





DAY 2

Key Verse: "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Bible Point: God loves us and takes care of us.

Why It Matters

Paul and Silas are so amazing! After being publicly humiliated—stripped, beaten, and thrown in prison—they spent their time in jail singing hymns and praising God. They loved God and were certain that he loved them. They relied on that. They were comforted by that. They responded to that. What a wonderful example for the kids and adults at your VBS! It's so easy to get caught up in life's daily challenges, which, thankfully, don't often include what Paul and Silas had to go through. Use today's activities to remind everyone at your VBS that just as God cared for Paul and Silas in such dire circumstances, he will certainly care for them!

Bible Story: Paul and Silas are put in prison. (Acts 16:16-40)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- It's widely accepted that the book of Acts was written by Luke. In Acts 16:10, the first "we" section of Acts begins, as opposed to the "they" sections. Luke may have joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy on their journey and therefore he wrote this section in the plural first-person.
- In Philippi, Paul preached for the first time on European soil. Normally, he would have gone to the local synagogue. In Jewish law, if there were 10 male heads of households who could regularly attend, a synagogue should be formed. Failing that, an outdoor place of prayer was to be designated. Since Philippi had no synagogue, prayer was held outside the city near the Gangitis River.
- The words of the demon-possessed slave girl are reminiscent of the demons who compulsively acknowledged Jesus' divinity. Here they acknowledged the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus.
- After the earthquake, no mention is made of crumbled walls or fallen ceilings. What is mentioned is that doors flew open and chains fell off.
- Under Roman law, a guard who let a prisoner escape could be put to death. The jailer was so upset thinking his prisoners had escaped that he was preparing to kill himself. But Paul somehow knew what the guard was planning and called out to stop him. Why didn't the other prisoners escape when they had the chance? The Bible doesn't say, but maybe they were too amazed by these men of God.
- By law, it was forbidden for Roman citizens to be sentenced without a fair hearing and subjected to punishment that was degrading—both of which Paul and Silas experienced. No wonder the officials apologized and hurried them out of town!

Day 2 Paul's Adventures

Getting Ready

Make "handcuffs" by cutting plastic mesh fencing into sections (see photo). Participants in each rotation will reuse the handcuffs. Place the handcuffs in a basket just inside the door of your room.

String rope lights around the ceiling of your tent or room, and plug them in. Don't use any other lighting today. Leave the rope lights in place, as you'll use them later in the week.

Give Dionysius his script. Dionysius will enter the room when he hears this cue: *"Unfortunately, much of that thought is wrong."*

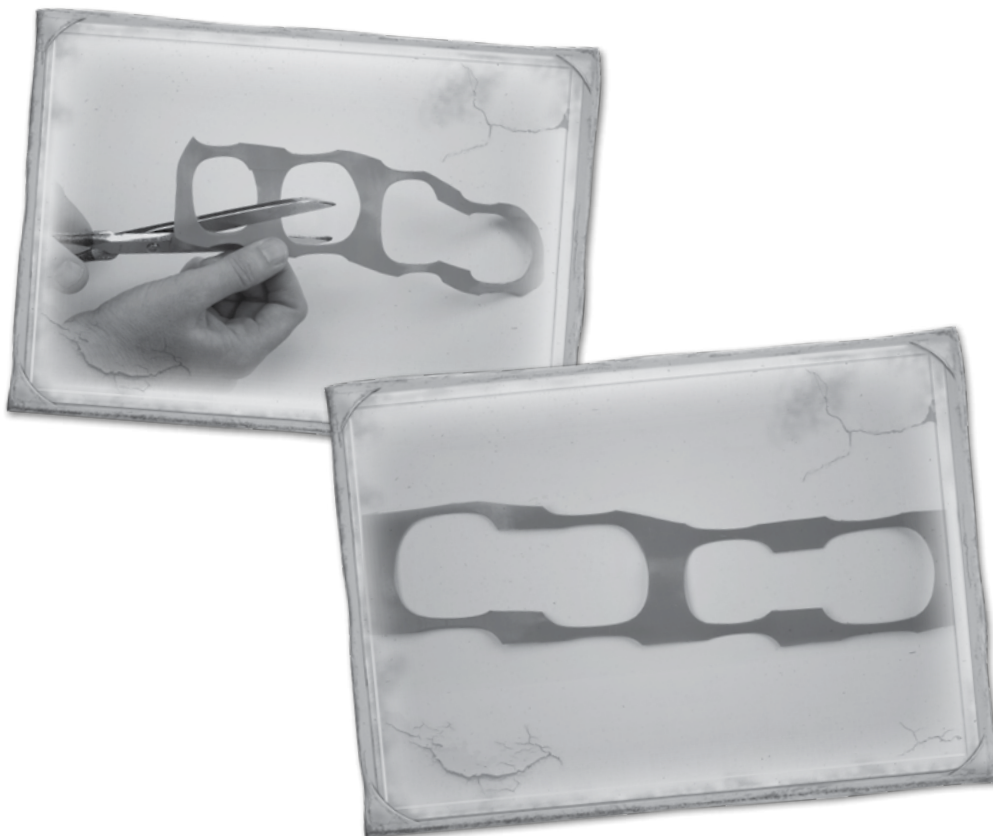
Welcome

Welcome participants into your tent-making house, and have them sit knee-to-knee in their Oikos.

Say: **Welcome! I'm so glad to see you again. There's so much I want to share with you about Jesus. Ask:**

❓ **Tell me, what do you think of Athens so far?** (Listen to a few answers.)

Say: **Athens is an amazing place—such a center for culture and thought. Unfortunately, much of that thought is wrong.**



Supplies for Today

- ❑ plastic mesh fencing—used as "handcuffs" (1 handcuff per participant per rotation, plus a few extra)
- ❑ basket to hold handcuffs
- ❑ rope lights
- ❑ small bottles of orange-scented oil (1 per Oikos per rotation)
- ❑ chain to rattle
- ❑ photocopy of script for Dionysius



Dionysius's Worries

(Dionysius hurries into the room.)

Dionysius: What did I hear? What are you saying? What's wrong with Athens? *(Looks at participants.)* Oh...hello...it's you again. You seem to be taking up a lot of Paul's valuable time.

Paul: Dionysius, please, where are your manners? These are my new friends, and I'm happy to see them. They believe in Jesus, just like I do.

Dionysius: *(Looks toward the door.)* Shhh. There's really no need to shout, Paul. No need to advertise the fact that you believe in Jesus.

Paul: *(Becomes a little animated and louder.)* But that's where you're wrong, Dionysius. I want to shout it from the rooftops! I want to tell *everyone* about Jesus! What I meant about Athens is that the city is filled with so many statues to honor fake gods. But why aren't people honoring God and Jesus?

Dionysius: *(Looks anxious.)* Shhh. There you go again. There's no need to be so loud.

Paul: *(Puts hand on Dionysius's shoulder.)* Dionysius, what's wrong, my friend? Are you ashamed that I believe in Jesus?

Dionysius: *(Looks down.)* Not ashamed. Just...a little afraid for you. *(Lowers voice.)* I heard a rumor that you got into trouble in another city. You got into trouble for talking about Jesus. That's not true, is it?

Paul: *(Laughs a little.)* Oh, my friend, I've gotten into *lots* of trouble for telling people about Jesus. But that will never stop me.

Dionysius: I didn't know you could get into trouble for believing. I...I don't want to get into trouble. I'm a member of the Council...

Paul: You don't have to worry, my friend. **God loves us and takes care of us.** ("It's true!")

Dionysius: But what happened? What kind of trouble did you get into?

Paul: Join my new friends, and I'll tell you.

(Dionysius sits with an Oikos.)



Jail Journey

Paul: My friend Silas and I were in another city, where we were walking to our place of prayer. There was this slave girl—a fortune teller—who made lots of money for her owners. Well, actually, it's kind of a long story. What matters is that we made her owners, plus a lot of other people, mad by talking about Jesus. They were so mad that they grabbed us and beat us and even threw us into prison!

At the prison, they told the jailer to make sure we didn't escape. That was huge for the jailer, because if we escaped, *he* could be put to death. So to make sure, he put us way back in the inner dungeon. Then he put us in handcuffs and put our feet in chains.

Dionysius: *(Starts to get up.)* OK, I don't like this. I'm sure I have a Council meeting or something...

Paul: *(Shakes head.)* Sit down, Dionysius. You wanted to hear what happened.

(Paul gives each person a pair of "handcuffs" to put on. Participants sit with their feet pulled up and together in front of them, as if their feet and hands are chained together.)

Paul: We were already in so much pain from being beaten, and sitting on that damp floor didn't help. It was so dark... and cold!

Around midnight, we were praying and singing hymns to God while the other prisoners listened. What's a song we all know? "Jesus Loves Me"? Let's sing that. *(Leads participants in singing "Jesus Loves Me." Stops partway through the song.)*

Suddenly, there was a huge earthquake! *(Leads everyone in pounding the floor with their feet.)* The whole building was shaking! *(Leads everyone in swaying as they continue pounding.)*

At that very moment, the doors flew open, and the chains on every prisoner fell off! *(Rattles the chain, then tells everyone to remove their handcuffs.)*



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Dionysius: *(Starts to get up again.)* Good! Let's go! Let's get out of this place!

Paul: No, Dionysius, sit down. The story doesn't end there. The jailer woke up and saw the open doors. He thought we had all escaped, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself. I yelled, "No! Stop!" Help me yell to the jailer. *(Leads everyone in yelling "No! Stop! Don't do it!" a few times.)*

The jailer ran in and fell down trembling before us. He said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So we told him: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

And the most amazing thing happened! Immediately, the jailer and everyone in his house believed in Jesus! Then the jailer fed us and took care of our wounds. It felt so good to get those handcuffs off!

Do you see, Dionysius? God took care of us! We were in prison, and he took care of us. **God loves us and takes care of us ("It's true!")**—no matter where we are or what we're going through.

Dionysius: *(Speaks while leaving.)* Well, I'm glad it worked out, Paul. Your God sounds pretty powerful. Of course, all those gods are the same...but maybe we can talk about it more some other time. See you later.

(Dionysius leaves.)

Sweet Scents

Say: Silas and I needed God's care in jail. In your Oikos, think of a situation in your life right now that needs God's care. Maybe you're having trouble with a bully at school or problems at home, or maybe someone you know is sick. You won't have to tell anyone but God.

Give each Oikos Leader a small bottle of scented oil. **Oikos Leaders, go around your group and wipe a little scented oil on the wrists of each person, where their handcuffs were. As you do, say the person's name and say "God loves you and will take care of you." At the end, have someone in your group do the same for your Oikos Leader.**

When groups are finished, say: **Each time you smell that sweet scent on your hand, think how sweet God's love and care are. Let's thank God right now.**

Pray: Dear God, we know you love us. And you know each situation we thought of. Thank you for taking care of us. Thank you for sending Jesus. In his name, amen.

Thank everyone for coming, and invite them to visit you tomorrow.



DAY 3



Key Verse: “The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?” (Psalm 118:6)

Bible Point: God loves us when others don’t.

Why It Matters

Imagine how Paul and his friends must have felt, knowing that an angry mob was rioting in the streets, bent on finding them. Imagine hiding, fearing for your life, and worrying about the welfare of the other believers. While it’s unlikely that the adults and kids at your VBS face similar circumstances, they may very well feel alone, ostracized, and unwelcome. Use today’s activities to encourage them—to help them realize that God loves them, no matter what!

Bible Story: An angry mob searches for Paul and Silas. (Acts 17:1-9)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Thessalonica was a city of about 200,000 and was central in Macedonia for commerce and government. Paul and Silas must have seen the city as optimal for spreading the Gospel, because immediately after leaving Philippi, they traveled the 100 miles to Thessalonica.
- The Bible tells us that Paul preached in Thessalonica for three consecutive Sabbaths, but he was probably there much longer. We know this because the church in Philippi sent him money more than once while he was in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16), and he also worked to support himself while there.
- Here again, some of the Jews were angry—“jealous,” the Bible says—and they started a riot. It’s likely that Jason, whose home the mob attacked, was a new convert who had been housing Paul and the other apostles.
- The bond posted by Jason and a few other believers probably guaranteed that Paul and Silas could no longer reside in Jason’s home and, moreover, would have to leave town and not return; otherwise, Jason and the believers would forfeit their money. Maybe this is why Paul didn’t return to Thessalonica, although he obviously wanted to (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18).
- Despite the trouble faced by this early church in Thessalonica, believers there continued to grow in faith. In later letters, Paul commends them for proclaiming the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:14-16).
- Paul and company did leave town after the riot and traveled on to Berea, about 50 miles away. It wasn’t long, though, before Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea to stir up trouble against Paul again. Several Berean believers escorted Paul to Athens, while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea to strengthen the growing church there. When he arrived in Athens, and perhaps when he saw the idolatrous nature of the city, Paul asked the Bereans to tell Silas and Timothy to come to Athens.

Day 3 Paul's Adventures

Supplies for Today

- ❑ Flicker Lights* (1 per participant per rotation, plus a few extra)
- ❑ basket to hold lights
- ❑ "Angry Mob" sound effect (available at group.com/vbsTools, Athens Tools, Updates/Resources)

* available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier

Getting Ready

Choose another room for you and the Oikoi to hide in during your Bible drama. Darken the room as much as possible, but have enough light so you can safely enter. If it's just not possible to use another room, huddle everyone into a corner of Paul's house. But running to a different room will immensely add to the effect.

Download the "Angry Mob" sound effect to play from a phone, MP3 player, or computer—or burn it to a CD. If you're using a helper, place the device with the sound effect out of sight near your hiding room, and have your volunteer play the sound effect loudly as you arrive and briefly while you're in the room. He or she will lower the volume and then turn it off after you've been in the hiding room about 2 minutes. Practice the timing with your volunteer in advance.

A Hiding Place

Meet participants outside the door, and when everyone has arrived, urgently gather them into a huddle around you.

Say: Hurry! Listen to me! We've got to move! It's not safe to meet at my house. There's a mob in the Marketplace—an angry mob! I think they may be after us! And they're mad! Come with me! We have to hide! We have to find a safe place!

Have everyone hurry with you to the other room. Bring the basket of Flicker Lights along. When you get inside the new room, have everyone huddle around you.

I'm sorry to upset you, but I just don't think it's safe at my house right now. I heard those loud voices—listen, do you hear them? Shhh! We'd better stay here for a while. Listen, I've been through this kind of thing before. That angry mob may be coming after me because I believe in Jesus. Coming after us! Huddle closely together in your Oikos—and be quiet! And here, you'd each better take one of these.

Distribute a Flicker Light to each participant. Then gather everyone together into one large huddle away from the door. Keep reassuring participants that God loves them even when others don't. Remind them, too, that God loves them and takes care of them. Keep everyone huddled together, and keep whispering encouragement. After about 2 minutes, your volunteer will lower the volume and turn the sound effect off. You'll stay in the hiding room as you continue.

Advice Column

If you have Oikoi with very young children, you might want to warn those Oikos Leaders ahead of time to keep their little ones close so they don't become afraid.



Say: Well, it sounds like that angry mob is moving away. Whew! That was close! Let's keep our little lights on, just in case. I don't think we should leave yet.

You know, an angry mob came after me and my friend Silas in another town, a place called Thessalonica. All because we were telling people about Jesus. We got away, but they attacked the home of my friend Jason, where we had been staying. They dragged Jason in front of the Council and made him pay a big fine. I felt bad about that, so Silas and I decided to leave town.



Feeling Unloved

Say: No doubt about it, believing in Jesus can make you pretty unpopular sometimes. But God loves us when others don't. ("It's true!") Ask:

- ? Have you ever been in a situation where believing in Jesus or talking about Jesus caused you a problem? I don't mean anything like an angry mob, but maybe someone made fun of you or made you feel uncomfortable. Tell your Oikos what happened.

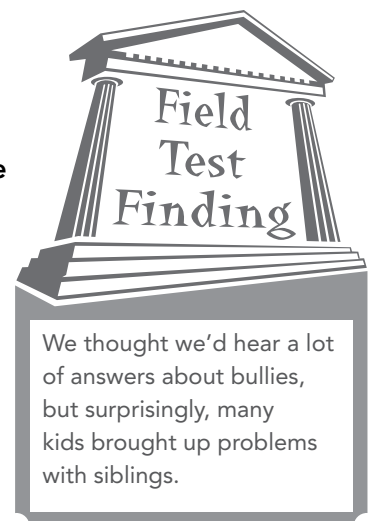
Leaders, you can answer first. Then everyone else in your group can share.

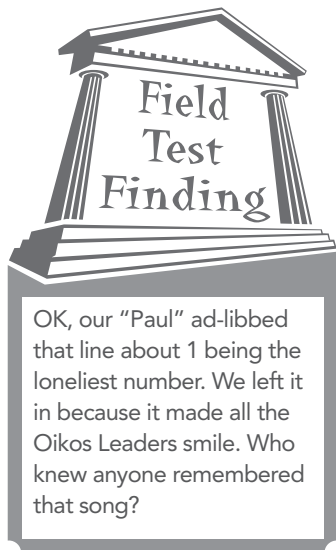
Give participants several minutes to talk, and give a 30-second warning before closing the conversations.

Say: You know, we can't let other people stop us from telling about Jesus or believing in God's love. I know God loves me. But I also know that not everyone I meet is going to love me. Which is surprising, since I'm such a likable guy. But it's true—not everyone loves me. Ask:

- ? When is a time you felt like someone didn't love you? Maybe you didn't get invited to a birthday party or a friend talked behind your back or your brother was mean to you. Tell your Oikos about that.

Give participants several minutes to talk, and give a 30-second warning before closing the conversations.





Never Alone

Say: **No matter how other people treat us, one thing is always true. God loves us! God loves us when others don't. ("It's true!") We're so special to God. That's why he sent Jesus. Before you go, I want to leave you with a reminder of God's love.**

Give each Oikos Leader a red washable marker, and keep one for yourself. Use the marker to make a vertical mark on the back of one of your hands, and show it to everyone.

This looks like the number 1, doesn't it? Like one person, all alone. One is the loneliest number, you know. All alone is how it feels when others don't love us.

Have Oikos members each put a fist into the center of their Oikos circle. Leaders can quickly make a vertical mark on each person's hand. Have everyone keep their fists touching in the circle.

But because Jesus died on the cross for us, we're never alone. Mark another line on your hand to make a cross shape. **God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to be our friend forever.** Have Oikos Leaders make another line on each person's hand to make a cross shape.

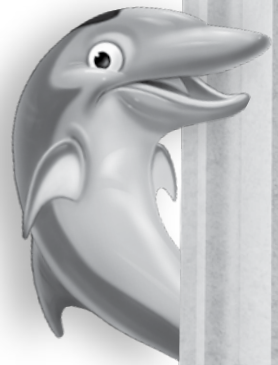
Your cross can remind you what *real* love is—the kind of love God gives us! God loves you *so much*. Each time you look at the cross on your hand, remember that God loves us when others don't! ("It's true!")

Let's thank God for his love right now. When I count to 3, use your fist with the cross to knuckle bump everyone in your Oikos, and shout "Thank you, God!" Ready? 1, 2, 3! Thank you, God!

After the knuckle bump, thank participants for visiting you and invite them to come back tomorrow.



DAY 4



Key Verse: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Bible Point: God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus.

Why It Matters

Paul was alone in a new city, surrounded everywhere by pagan thought and practices. Just mentioning Jesus would set Paul apart and possibly put him in danger. After all, he had just escaped yet another mob of angry men. Why risk it? Why not at least wait until his friends joined him in Athens? Because, as the Bible says, “he was deeply troubled” by what he saw. He simply couldn’t keep silent. He knew that Jesus and his redemptive work on the cross are the most important things in life. God’s love is so incredible that Paul *had* to talk about it. Use today’s activities to help the kids and adults in your VBS realize that God loves them so very much that he sent his Son, Jesus, to save them.

Bible Story: Paul preaches about Jesus. (Acts 17:16-34)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Athenians loved nothing better than to debate the latest ideas, so it’s no wonder that Paul’s teaching caught the attention of the local thinkers. Some called him a “babbler,” originally referring to those who picked up bits and pieces of ideas and presented them as their own. Others thought Paul was advocating foreign gods.
- Two main schools of philosophy were popular in Athens—Epicurean and Stoic. Epicureans believed that the chief goal of man should be pleasure and happiness, both attained by avoiding excesses and the fear of death. They didn’t deny the existence of gods but didn’t believe gods involved themselves in the affairs of men. Stoics believed in living in harmony with nature and emphasized man’s rational abilities.
- The Epicureans and Stoics took Paul to the Council of the Areopagus in Athens, where he gave what has become known as his sermon on Mars Hill. This council was the chief judicial body of the city, and it exercised judgment over religious and educational matters. Their ruling would determine whether Paul could continue to preach in Athens or whether he must remain silent.
- Paul began his address to the council by trying to find common ground with the Athenians. He mentioned their altar to an unknown god and from there attempted to show them that God could be known in the redemptive person of his Son, Jesus.
- Some members of the council sneered at the idea of resurrection of the dead, but a few others became believers. Then the council decided to defer a decision on Paul’s case.

Day 4 Paul's Adventures

Supplies for Today

- ☐ wooden cross about 4 feet high
- ☐ bucket or large basket
- ☐ books or other weights to hold cross upright
- ☐ brown cloth to cover bucket or basket
- ☐ large Glue Dots*
- ☐ Paper Handprints* (1 per participant)
- ☐ baskets to hold handprints (1 per Oikos per rotation)
- ☐ markers and crayons
- ☐ rope lights
- ☐ CD player
- ☐ *Celebration Music* CD*
- ☐ scroll (optional)
- ☐ volunteer (optional)

* available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier



Getting Ready

Secure your cross to the wall near your door.

Cue the *Celebration Music* CD to "Untitled Hymn" (track 4) and set the CD player to "repeat." Place the CD player out of sight if you have a volunteer to operate it or within reach if you don't have a volunteer.

Plug in the rope lights, and use them as your only lighting today.

Prepare a basket for each Oikos in the rotation. In the basket, place a stack of *only one color* of Paper Handprints, plus several markers and crayons. (We found it was distracting to have several colors of Paper Handprints in each basket—kids got too involved choosing a color. One color per basket worked great!)

Paul's Confession

As Oikoi enter, walk back and forth, talking to yourself as if memorizing a speech. If you have a scroll, pretend to be reading it.

Say: **Come in! Come in! Don't mind me—I'm just practicing what I'm going to say. I want to say it in just the right way. I really want to get it right.** Continue practicing as participants sit in their knee-to-knee Oikos circles.

Oh, that's right. Maybe you haven't heard. The officials here in Athens want me to speak before the Council. They want me to explain what I've been saying about Jesus this week. You know, the last time I spoke before a council was in Thessalonica—and that's what led to the whole angry mob thing. I'm a little worried that might happen again. Let me ask your advice. Ask:

? Do you think I should do it? Do you think I should speak before the Council in Athens? Have kids call out their answers. Don't be surprised if kids shout out "Yes!" and "You have to do it, Paul!"

Keep pacing as you continue.

Say: **OK, OK, I have to do it! The people in Athens love to talk about new ideas. So maybe they'll listen when I talk about God's love.**

I need to tell them that God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus.
(“It’s true!”)

You know how much I love to tell people about Jesus. It’s the most important thing in my life. Lower your voice a little. But it wasn’t always that way.

Sit on the floor with Oikoi. **There’s something I need to tell you. Something I should have told you yesterday. You probably think that I’ve loved and believed in Jesus since I was a kid, like you. Right?** Pause. **Well, that’s not true. Remember those angry mobs we talked about yesterday?** Pause and shake your head sadly. **Well, I used to be part of those angry mobs. In fact, I used to lead those angry mobs. I was one of the main people who hunted down Christians and put them in jail.**

I thought Jesus was a fake. I was glad he was dead. What I did was so wrong. So awful. I was one of the worst sinners ever. I was the king of sin! Ask:

② Do you know what sin is? Let a few kids call out answers.

Say: Sin is doing wrong things—doing things that go against God. And what I did went *completely* against God.

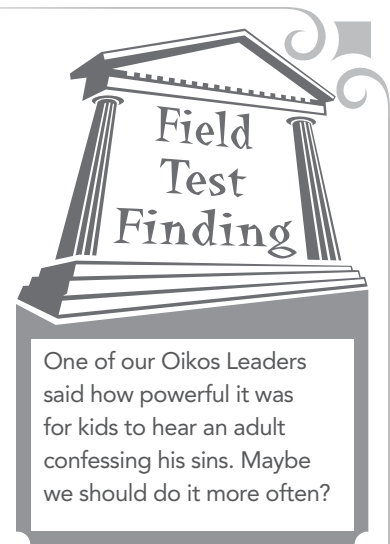
Paper Sins

As you continue, hand each Oikos a basket holding a stack of Paper Handprints plus markers and crayons. **I confessed my sins to you. Now it’s your turn. Think of something wrong you’ve done recently. A sin you’ve committed. You won’t have to tell anyone but God. Maybe you yelled at your sister. Or were mean to a friend. Pause.**

As you think of that sin, turn your paper hand to the white side. Write or draw a picture of the sin you thought of. It can just be a word or two—you don’t have to write a lot. Pause briefly as participants write or draw.

Like I said, I was a terrible sinner. I *hated* Christians. But then—it’s still so hard for me to believe—one day as I was traveling, hunting down more Christians to throw in jail, a light from the sky shone down on me! And then a voice from heaven called my name. Continue in an awed voice, almost a whisper. **Do you know whose voice it was? It was Jesus! Jesus called my name from heaven. Jesus wanted me—a terrible sinner—to know how much he loves me. He called my name.**

Say: Turn your paper hand over to the colored side,



and write your name. Pause.

When I realized it was Jesus calling my name, I just knew he'd be really mad at me for all the terrible things I'd done. But do you know what? When Jesus called my name, he wasn't mad at all. He loved me. He just wanted me to come to him.

Jesus is calling *your* name, too. He wants you to come to him. He's not mad at you for the sin you wrote. He loves you. He loves you so much that he died on the cross for you. Point to the cross. When he was nailed to the cross, your sins were nailed there with him. He took the punishment for your sins. And he came back to life so you could live with him forever. Jesus changed my life completely and forever, and he wants to do the same for you. He's calling your name, just like he called mine. All you have to do is come to him.

Softly play "Untitled Hymn."



CD Track 4

Calling Your Name

Call an Oikos Leader's name: [Name], **Jesus is calling your name. Come to the cross. Come to Jesus.** Have that Leader come up to the cross. Place a Glue Dot on the white side of his or her paper hand, and have the Leader stick the paper hand to the cross, colored side out.

Have that Oikos Leader call each of his or her Oikos members by name, as you did, by saying, "[Name], Jesus is calling your name. Come to Jesus." Have Oikos members, one-by-one, place their paper hands on the cross and then return to their seats. The Oikos Leader (or you) can help with the Glue Dots.

Then call another Oikos Leader to come to Jesus and place his or her

Advice Column

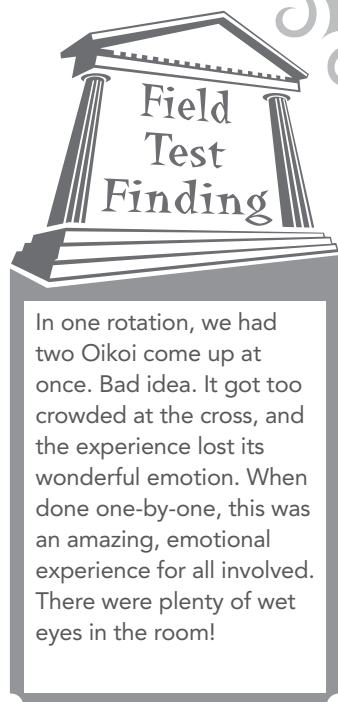
Simply hold the roll of Glue Dots, and let each participant touch the back of the paper hand to the next Glue Dot on the roll. It will immediately transfer to the paper. That's way easier and faster than trying to remove each Glue Dot from the roll by hand.



paper hand on the cross. Have that Leader call his or her Oikos members by name. Continue until everyone has placed a paper hand on the cross.

When everyone has placed a paper hand on the cross and is seated again, close in prayer.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for us. Thank you that Jesus is alive and calling us each by name. Please help every person here come to Jesus. In his wonderful name, amen.





DAY 5

Key Verse: "Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." (John 13:34)

Bible Point: God loves us and wants us to share his love.

Why It Matters

Imagine how Paul felt after speaking to the council in Athens. Although a few became believers, many sneered at him, and the rest were apathetic. Before Athens, he had to flee an angry mob in Berea; before that, an even angrier mob in Thessalonica. And yet, here he was, preparing to go to Corinth to share the good news of Jesus. In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says of his original trip: "I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). He may have been discouraged and even afraid, but he didn't let that stop him from spreading the Gospel. Use Paul's courage and determination to encourage the kids and adults at your VBS. God will strengthen and lead them, just as he did Paul!

Bible Story: Paul continues his journey. (Acts 18:1-5)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Since Paul couldn't legally preach in Athens, he could wait for the council to give him permission or he could move to a more receptive area.
- Both Athens and Corinth were in Greece. Under Roman rule, Macedonia and Achaia were the two provinces that made up the whole of Greece. Athens was in Achaia, as was Corinth, where Paul traveled next.
- While Paul doesn't seem to have had tremendous success in converting Athenians to Christianity, we do learn that after his speech before the council, at least a few people became believers. One believer that the Bible mentions was Dionysius, a member of the council, and another was a woman named Damaris. The Bible says there were "others with them," as well.
- It seems odd that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:15 that Stephanas and his household in Corinth were "the first of the harvest of believers in Greece." Perhaps the distinction for Corinth had to do with the establishment of an actual church. There's no record of a church being founded in Athens.

Day 5 Paul's Adventures

Getting Ready

Roll the Letter From Paul papers like scrolls, and secure each one with an accompanying sticker. Place the letters in a basket by the door.

Make a copy of the letter from Dionysius on page 36. Roll the paper up like a scroll, or tape it inside an existing scroll. (If your Dionysius volunteer can attend, skip this step.)

Turn on the rope lights. They're all the light you'll need for this session.

Moving Day

As participants enter your tent-making house, be folding up pieces of material and putting them in the burlap bag, as if packing.

Say: **Welcome! Come in! It's so good to see you again, my friends. I've really enjoyed getting to know you during our time here in Athens. I hear you're leaving town after today. So am I! That's why I'm packing.**

My friends Silas and Timothy were supposed to come to Athens, but there's been a change of plans. Now we're all going to meet in Corinth. So that's where I'm headed next. Ask:

? Tell me again, where is your Oikos from?

Have each Oikos say the name of its city. After each city name, say something like: **Corinth? I've been to Corinth. I even started a church there. I need to write a letter to the people in Corinth. I think I'll call it my letter to the Corinthians, since that's what people who live in Corinth are called.** Vary what you say to match the Oikos name, but try to mention a letter with each statement.

After all the Oikoi have told you their names, continue: **I love to write letters, you know. I think I'm pretty good at it. Well, not me—God tells me what to write, so I guess it's God who's pretty good at writing letters! Maybe someday all my letters will be in a book that you can read. Wouldn't that be cool? I hope that happens!**

Supplies for Today

- ☐ Letters From Paul (with stickers)* (1 per participant)
- ☐ copy of letter from Dionysius (p. 36)
- ☐ 2 baskets to hold rolled letters and Flicker Lights
- ☐ Flicker Lights* (1 per participant per rotation)
- ☐ rope lights
- ☐ burlap or old-looking bag for Paul's packing
- ☐ scroll (optional)

* available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier



Light of the World

Continue packing as you talk.

Say: I'm so glad I got the chance to meet you here in Athens. I'm sad to leave you, my new friends. But God loves us and wants us to share his love. ("It's true!") So I need to keep traveling and telling people about Jesus. It's my life's work. Like I said last night, Jesus completely changed my life—and I know he can do that for other people! But someone has to *tell* people about Jesus first. And that's where you and I come in.

It's kind of like this. Hold up a Flicker Light, but don't turn it on yet. The world is a dark place for people who don't know Jesus. It's dark with sin. Turn on your Flicker Light. But Jesus is a light in a dark world. When you know Jesus, his love shines the way for you. Then you can tell someone else, and Jesus will light up that person's light. Give each participant a Flicker Light. (Tell everyone to wait to turn them on.)

Call someone by name, and hold your light to his or her unlit Flicker Light. When [name] believes in Jesus, then he [or she] can share his love! Let's see if we can share the love of Jesus all the way around our room. Have that person turn on his or her Flicker Light and hold its "flame" to another person's unlit light. Each person will "pass the light" to another person until everyone's Flicker Light is lit.

Wow, look at that! The love of Jesus is lighting up my whole tent-making house! Just think how it could light up the world if we each tell someone else about Jesus! Lots of someones! God loves us and wants us to share his love. ("It's true!")

Hey, that was fun. Let's say that again, and when you say "it's true," hold your light up high. God loves us and wants us to share his love. ("It's true!")

Hold your light up high. That was awesome!



Ready Review

Say: Everyone needs to hear about Jesus. And some people—like me—need to hear about his love over and over before they finally understand.

Oh, and speaking of sharing God's love, I think my speech yesterday before the Council went pretty well. I'm not sure if anyone believed in Jesus because of it—but I hope so! At least an angry mob didn't come after me.

So when I get to Corinth and you get back to your homelands, we'll all have the chance to share God's love and the good news about Jesus. To give us ideas of what to say, let's think back to what we've discovered together. As we review, hold your light up high every time we say "it's true!"

- ◆ On our first night, we learned that God loves us all. ("It's true!") Hold your light up. **Do you remember that? What happened with the candy?** Have participants call out quick comments about how only some people got candy.
- ◆ And then the next night, we learned that God loves us and takes care of us. ("It's true!") Hold your light up. **What happened to us?** Have participants call out quick comments about how they were in jail.
- ◆ Then we learned that God loves us when others don't. ("It's true!") Hold your light up. **What happened to us?** Have participants call out quick comments about the angry mob.
- ◆ And last night we discovered that even though we *all* sin—and that includes me—God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus. ("It's true!") Hold your light up. **What happened to us?** Have participants call out quick comments about putting the handprints on the cross.

Letter From Dionysius

Say: So now in your Oikos, talk about how you could share God's love next week. Maybe you'll think of what you'll say or who you'll say it to or even where you might say it. Talk for a minute about how you'll share God's love. Give groups a short time to talk.

Thanks for those ideas! I might use some of those when I get to Corinth. Look down and casually pick up the scroll. Hmm...I wonder what this is. Open it. Oh look, it's a letter from Dionysius. He's in another all-day meeting, I guess. Let's see what he says. Hold up the scroll, and read the letter aloud.



Letter From Dionysius

Dear Paul,

I'm sorry I won't see you before you leave. I'm in an all-day meeting. But I have big news! I was in the crowd yesterday at the Council. I heard your speech. And I finally understand what you've been trying to tell me. I know who Jesus is—he's God's Son, and he loves me!

Thank you for telling me about Jesus and for sharing God's love. I'll do my best to share that love with the people in Athens.

Write to me when you get a chance.

Your friend, Dionysius

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Say: **Wow! That's great! Dionysius finally believes in Jesus! You never know how what you say might change a person's life. Look at how long it took *me* to believe. So when you get home, please don't give up talking about Jesus. Please never stop sharing God's love.**

Speaking of writing letters, I have a gift for you. Friends like to give gifts, and I love to write letters, so...I wrote each of you a letter to read later. I'll give it to you in a minute. But first, I have a favor to ask. Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

Have everyone hold a lighted Flicker Light.

Pray: **Dear God, thank you for these new friends. Thank you for time we've had to talk about your love. Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how much you love us. Please help us to share your love with everyone we meet. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Ok, I'll trade you my letter for your Flicker Light as you leave. It's been great getting to know you!

As they leave, give each participant a Letter From Paul and a fond farewell. Encourage them to share God's love after they leave Athens and to look for letters from you in a book someday!



Marketplace Conversations

Differing Views

In past Holy Land Adventure programs, we've included the role of a guard or soldier who roams the Marketplace and interacts with kids and adults. In Athens, we've included two such roles—a Pharisee and a ship captain. The interaction with these two characters in the Marketplace is an easy and effective way to help kids verbalize their faith.

Understanding the Roles

One or both characters will roam the streets of the Marketplace, stopping occasionally to examine merchandise and make purchases. This is a great time to start conversations with participants. They can stand on the path through the Marketplace and greet Oikos members, trying to get them to stop and talk. Or they could look over a child's shoulder when he or she purchases food and start a conversation there.

- ♦ The visiting Pharisee is someone who doesn't believe in Jesus and disdains Paul's change of heart and new-found devotion to Christ. The Pharisee can ask participants what they've heard Paul saying about Jesus.
- ♦ The ship captain, on the other hand, is someone who has seen and heard Jesus during his travels and is a believer like Paul. He could tell participants where he's sailed and the things he's seen and heard about Jesus and Paul.

These extra drama players can have fun with their roles but should avoid harassing or frightening kids.

Historical Background

Here are a few historical facts to help volunteers get into character.

Pharisees:

- ♦ Paul was a Pharisee himself, and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). The usual age for beginning the study of the Torah was between 14 and 16. If Paul's education followed this pattern, he would have moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel.
- ♦ The Pharisees believed in the bodily resurrection of the body and in the coming of a Messiah.



- ◆ Certainly not all Pharisees were hypocrites, as the term is often applied today. Pharisees were the spiritual leaders of their time and very learned in the Law. The bulk of Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees was due to their over-interpretation of Law, not the Law itself.
- ◆ The Pharisees placed utmost importance on the Law. Therefore, Paul's teaching that the Gentiles could be reconciled to God apart from the Law was certainly a non-Pharisee kind of teaching.

Ships in Paul's Time:

- ◆ Paul likely traveled on both merchant ships and smaller fishing boats during his missionary trips.
- ◆ Roman merchant ships had a single main mast, which carried a rectangular sail, although some ships also had small sails at the bow and stern. Roman ships did not have rudders; instead, they were steered by oars. Some of these merchant ships were large, measuring up to 180 feet long.
- ◆ Fishing boats, on the other hand, were much smaller and constructed with flat bottoms that allowed them to get close to shore while fishing. These boats were rowable but often also had a mast that allowed the fisherman to sail the boat.
- ◆ The Greek navy was based in Athens. At the height of her power, Athens had a fleet of 400 ships—a navy requiring close to 80,000 men.

The Pharisee's Dialogue

During the week, you'll have a chance to interact with children and adults. Identify yourself as a visiting Pharisee, and use the following questions and phrases to help families process what they are discovering about Paul and God's love.

- ◆ **Have you seen or heard Paul here in Athens? I wonder what he's saying now.**
- ◆ **Paul is a Pharisee just like me. But now he says all you have to do to get right with God is believe in Jesus. What happened to the Law? Pharisees are supposed to uphold God's Law!**
- ◆ **Is Paul still talking about Jesus, do you know? I believe in a coming Messiah, but it can't be Jesus like Paul believes, can it?**



- ◆ I can't understand what happened to Paul. He had such a good education. He was well on his way to becoming a great teacher of the Law. And then he started believing in Jesus, and now he's completely different. Why did he change?
- ◆ What are people saying about Paul here in Athens? I hope he'll stop talking about Jesus soon. Do you think that will happen?

The Ship Captain's Dialogue

During the week, you'll have a chance to interact with children and adults. Identify yourself as the captain of a ship, and use the following questions and phrases to help families process what they are discovering about Paul and God's love.

- ◆ I love to visit Athens. Her warships are a sight to behold. My ship is just a small merchant vessel, but it's taken me lots of places. I even got to hear Jesus speak more than once. Have you heard of Jesus?
- ◆ I hear Paul's in town. I've met him once during my travels. I love that boy's faith in Jesus! At least I *hope* he still believes in Jesus. Have you met Paul? What's he saying these days?
- ◆ Athens is sure a strange place—all these statues to fake gods. What do you think of this city?
- ◆ Where are you from? I've traveled so much I don't even remember where I'm from! I guess it doesn't really matter. What matters is where we're going, right? So what do you think about life after death? I'm a Jesus believer, myself.
- ◆ That Paul is quite a character! He's not afraid to share his faith in Jesus with anyone! I'm not that bold, but I'm working on it. I meet lots of people who don't believe in Jesus. Any advice about what I should say to them?

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Questions? Here's how to get answers:

- ◆ **First, check carefully through this book.**
There's a LOT of helpful information tucked into these pages. The answer is probably already in your hands!
- ◆ **Connect with your VBS Director and leadership team.**
Remember, you're not alone! You're part of a dynamic ministry team, so don't be afraid to take advantage of the people resources that surround you.
- ◆ **Ask other VBS leaders through Group's online networking opportunities.** Join the conversation on our forum at group.com/vbs or on our Facebook page at facebook.com/groupvbs. These discussion groups connect you with other leaders nationwide so you can share ideas, ask questions, and brainstorm.

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