

Paul Is Shipwrecked

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: We can trust God in the storm, because God keeps His word. Paul said, "I believe God," and every one of the 276 people on the ship escaped safe to land.

Bible passage: Acts 27:1–28:10. Read it before class.

Memory verse: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." *Acts 27:25 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.

Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Under it, write "two hundred threescore and sixteen" (for the opening game).

1. Opening game: Count the Souls (5–10 minutes)

Split into teams of three or four. Point to the words on the board: "two hundred threescore and sixteen." Say: "This is a number in the King James Bible. A **score** is twenty. Work it out as a number." The first team to get it right wins ($200 + 60 + 16 = 276$). Say: "That is how many people were on one ship in the middle of a great storm. Let's find out what God did for every one of them."

2. Bible story: Every One Safe (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Acts 27. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

A prisoner at sea. Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33), though the rulers who heard him said he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds (26:31). Paul had appealed to Caesar, the ruler in Rome, so he was sent to Rome to be judged (25:11–12). **Look up Acts 27:1.** A centurion, an officer over a hundred soldiers, named Julius was in charge of Paul and some other prisoners.

Paul's warning. **Look up Acts 27:10–11.** Sailing was getting dangerous. Paul warned that the trip would bring hurt and much damage, but the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than Paul.

The storm. **Look up Acts 27:14–15.** A **tempestuous wind**, a stormy wind called Euroclydon, caught the ship, and they let it drive. They wrapped ropes under the ship to hold it together, made the ship lighter, and on the third day threw out the ship's **tackling**, its gear, with their own hands (27:17–19).

No sun, no stars. **Look up Acts 27:20.** For many days they saw neither sun nor stars, and "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."



"I believe God." Look up Acts 27:22–25. Paul stood up and told them to be of good cheer. There would be no loss of any man's life, only of the ship. The angel of God, "whose I am, and whom I serve," had stood by him that night and said, "Fear not, Paul." God had given Paul all those who sailed with him. Paul said, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Paul also said they would be cast upon an island (27:26).

Four anchors. On the fourteenth night, the sailors measured the water and found it getting shallow (27:27–28). Afraid of hitting rocks, they cast four anchors out of the **stern**, the back of the ship, and "wished for the day" (27:29). Some sailors tried to sneak away in the small boat, but Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." So the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boat fall off (27:30–32).

Bread and thanks. Look up Acts 27:35–37. Paul urged everyone to eat, because they had gone fourteen days without food (27:33–34). He took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, and began to eat. They all cheered up and ate. There were 276 souls on the ship.

Safe to land. When it was day, they saw a creek with a shore and steered toward it (27:39–40). **Look up Acts 27:41.** The ship ran aground where two seas met: the **forepart** (the front) stuck fast, and the **hinder part** (the back) was broken by the waves. **Look up Acts 27:44.** Those who could swim went first, and the rest came on boards and broken pieces of the ship. "They escaped all safe to land."

On the island. Look up Acts 28:1. The island was called Melita; today it is called Malta. The people of the island showed "no little kindness": they made a fire because of the rain and the cold (28:2). When Paul laid a bundle of sticks on the fire, a viper came out of the heat and fastened on his hand. Paul shook it off into the fire and felt no harm (28:3–5). Paul prayed for the father of Publius, the chief man of the island, laid his hands on him and healed him, and others with diseases came and were healed (28:7–9). Three months later they sailed on, and Paul came to Rome (28:11, 28:16).



3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The men gave up all hope (27:20). What made Paul different from everyone else on the ship?
2. Paul said, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (27:25). How do we know what God has said to us?
3. Paul gave thanks to God in front of 275 other people (27:35). Is it easy or hard to pray in front of others? Why does it matter?
4. The ship was lost, but every person was saved (27:22, 27:44). What does that tell you about what matters most to God?
5. What is a "storm" a kid your age might go through? What could you say to God in it?

Recall questions

1. What was the stormy wind called? (*Euroclydon, Acts 27:14*)
2. How many anchors did they cast out of the stern? (*Four, 27:29*)
3. What was the island called? (*Melita, 28:1; today it is called Malta*)

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **wherefore** means so, **sirs** means men, **be of good cheer** means cheer up and don't be afraid, and **even as it was told me** means just the way God said it. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Paul could say about God, 'whose I am, and whom I serve' (Acts 27:23). You can belong to God too. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name.

Remission means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: when something is hard or scary, say, "I believe God," and pray. And give thanks to God before you eat, like Paul did.



6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Acts 27:1: What was the centurion's name? (*Julius*)
2. Acts 27:14: What was the tempestuous wind called? (*Euroclydon*)
3. Acts 27:20: What did they not see for many days? (*Neither sun nor stars*)
4. Acts 27:23: Who stood by Paul that night? (*The angel of God*)
5. Acts 27:29: How many anchors did they cast out? (*Four*)
6. Acts 27:35: What did Paul do before he ate? (*He gave thanks to God in presence of them all*)
7. Acts 27:37: How many souls were in the ship? (*Two hundred threescore and sixteen, 276*)
8. Acts 28:1: What was the island called? (*Melita*)

Or choose the **Paul shipwreck word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/paul-shipwrecked-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/paul-shipwrecked-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/paul-shipwrecked-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/paul-shipwrecked-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You always keep Your word. When storms come in our lives, help us say, 'I believe God,' and help us cheer up the people around us. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note (left out of the story on purpose): as the ship broke up, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none could swim away and escape, but the centurion, "willing to save Paul," kept them from it (Acts 27:42–43). If an older child reads it and asks, answer simply: God kept His word, and every person on the ship lived.

About the viper: tell it simply. God kept Paul from harm (Acts 28:5). This is not a lesson about snakes: never play snake games, and tell kids never to touch a snake.

If a child is afraid of storms: it's okay to feel afraid. God was with Paul in the storm, and He is with us. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Psalm 56:3, KJV).

