

Acts 18:1-18

Aim of lesson

To show how Paul was guided by God to preach the gospel and to establish a church in Corinth.

Background study

Acts 20:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31; 2:1-5.

Suggested outline of lesson

The city of Corinth

Corinth was a great commercial sea port and a flourishing centre of trade and industry, with people coming and going from all parts of the known world. Try to capture the scene of this noisy and bustling place, with ships constantly entering and leaving the port, sailors chatting on the quayside telling their tales of other lands, traders loading and unloading wares, sightseers and visitors milling around on the sea-front. When Paul landed, many thoughts must have passed through his mind; he had heard of Corinth's reputation for immorality of the worst kind. Was this the kind of place for preaching the gospel? He would have realized that, in many ways, it was ideal. Here people from all parts of the world came together and reported and listened to the latest news, so where better for preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, which would then be taken to many different places and to all kinds of people? It was also an ideal place for preaching because the further away from God people are, the greater their need to hear the gospel message.

Paul's new friends

Paul had arrived alone in Corinth, but he soon had the companionship of Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he was to form a lasting friendship. They proved to be so loyal to Paul that at one time they risked their lives for him (Romans 16:3). They had much in common as all three were Jews and skilled in the craft of tent-making. Working together at their trade during the week would, no doubt, have created a close bond between them. One can imagine the stimulating conversations that went on while they worked. Paul worked in order to be able to support himself and not have to depend on the financial help of others while he preached. Every sabbath day they would go together to the synagogue where Paul debated and persuaded and tried to open the eyes of the other Jews to the wonderful truth about Jesus.

Relevance to the children's lives

We have seen what loyal friends Aquila and Priscilla were to Paul. They even risked their lives for his sake. Talk together about loyalty and friendship, and think of ways in which we can show these qualities to our friends. Discuss the kind of friends you should choose.

Paul Preaching

Paul's preaching was so dynamic that the Jews were forced to make a decision - to accept or reject his teaching. Those who accepted were baptized and became the founder members of the Christian church at Corinth. Those who rejected Paul's teaching became violently opposed to him, and a bitter argument developed. Paul realized at that point that he could do no more in that community, and he turned his attention to the godless Gentiles. Paul must often have felt very sad and discouraged because of the attitude of the Jews, and in despair when he saw the sinfulness and ignorance of the majority of the Corinthians. The Lord saw his need for encouragement and spoke to him with firm assurance. Greatly encouraged, Paul preached in Corinth with energy and enthusiasm for eighteen months. He built up the church, teaching the new converts, and helping them to overcome their many problems, realizing that it was not easy for them to break away from the influences which surrounded them and to which they were accustomed.

Trouble for Paul

The violent incident recorded in verses 12-17, is complex and difficult to convey to children. Suffice it to say that the Jews, who sincerely believed Paul was wrong, tried to stop him preaching. Remind the children that Paul himself had once violently opposed the Christians in a similar way, and for the same reason, and that he in turn was often the victim of Jewish fanaticism. However, the Greek authorities did not want to concern themselves with religious arguments, and ignored even the violent clash outside the court.

Paul's care for the new converts

Soon after this Paul, with Aquila and Priscilla, left Corinth to carry the good news of Jesus further afield, leaving many in Corinth believing in Jesus and waiting for his return to the earth. Although he had to leave them, Paul continued to be concerned about their spiritual well-being, and wrote letters of encouragement to them. Show the children the two recorded letters and, if time permits, read suitable extracts to them.

Worksheets

The solution to the grid is:

C	R	I	S	P	U	S				
			Y	E	A	R				
	C	E	N	C	H	R	E	A		
S	I	L	A	S						
			G	E	N	T	I	L	E	S
T	I	M	O	T	H	Y				
			G	A	L	L	I	O		
C	L	A	U	D	I	U	S			
		J	E	W	S					

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for friends who help and support us, as Aquila and Priscilla helped Paul. Guide us in our choice of friends, and help us to form good and lasting friendships. Amen.

Memory verse

“Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you” (Acts 18:9, RSV).