



ACTS

Of All the Apostles

You Will Be My Witnesses:

Running the Race

Lesson 42



Threats Can't Stop God's Word

Acts 23:1-11

Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3
James 1:2-4
1 Peter 3:8-18
2 Timothy 1:12, 2:9
1 Peter 2:20
Mark 13:11
Luke 12:11-12

Memory Verse

My brothers and sisters,
you will face all kinds of
trouble. When you do,
think of it as pure joy.
James 1:2 (NIRV)

Lesson Goals

Understand that Paul was
imprisoned and that he
suffered, just as they Holy
Spirit said

Understand that Paul
obeyed, even when it was
difficult

Understand that Paul
spoke the truth

Understand that Paul
would have a chance to go
to Rome

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

Have you ever run a race, or competed, in a place where you were different from everyone else and where you expected to be ridiculed? Were you afraid? Did you decide not to go? What did you say? In our lesson, Paul was not in quite the same situation, but He did go to Jerusalem, knowing that he would suffer and be imprisoned. Let's see what we can learn from his response.

After the Roman officer allowed Paul to speak to the crowd, he was taken before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. The Sanhedrin was made up of two different kinds of Jewish men, Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees believe that people will rise from the dead. They also believe that there are angels and spirits. The Sadducees don't believe in any of these things, but the two groups together make up the ruling body of the Jews.

The Roman commander had taken Paul before the Sanhedrin because he wanted to know what the Jews were charging Paul with. As Paul stood before them, he pled his innocence, "I have always done my duty to God. To this very day I feel that I have done nothing wrong." (Acts 23:1 NIRV)

When the high priest, Ananias, heard Paul say this, he ordered that Paul be hit on the mouth. He wanted this done, suggesting Paul not say anything else. Then Paul called the high priest a "pretender," a "hypocrite," a "white-washed wall." Those are pretty strong words! Why would Paul say something like that? Paul meant exactly what he said, because Paul knew the law he was being judged by. Remember, Paul had studied under the well known teacher, Gamaliel. Paul knew that, as soon as he ordered that Paul be hit on the mouth, the high priest had broken the law he was supposedly trying to uphold. And although those standing near Paul didn't seem to mind a little bending of the law, they didn't like Paul questioning the motives of the high priest.

Paul had a plan, though. He realized that the Sanhedrin was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees, "so he called out in the Sanhedrin. 'My

Application

We began thinking about a time when you raced or competed and faced ridicule. What was your response? What was Paul's response in our lesson?

Our memory verse says, "My brothers and sisters, you **will** face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy." (James 1:2 NlrV) Pure joy? That's not very easy. Why would you want to think of trouble as a thing of joy? The verses that follow our memory verse explain. They say, "Your faith will be put to the test. You know that when that happens it will produce in you the strength to continue. The strength to keep going must be allowed to finish its work. Then you will be all you should be. You will have everything you need." (James 1:3-4 NlrV)

Going through trouble can create something really good in us if we will let God use it that way. It's like applying fire to silver. The silver has to be heated very hot and all the impurities burned off so that the silversmith can see his own reflection. Are you willing to let God do that in your life?

brothers,' he said, 'I am a Pharisee. I am the son of a Pharisee. I believe that people will rise from the dead. That's why I am on trial.'" (Acts 23:6 NlrV)

Paul's plan played itself out very well. As soon as he announced that he was a Pharisee, and not only that, but the son of a Pharisee, the two groups of the Sanhedrin, Pharisee and Sadducee, began to argue. "They began to take sides . . . People were causing a lot of trouble and making a lot of noise." (Acts 23:7b, 9a NlrV) Some of the Pharisees, siding with Paul as one of their own, claimed to find nothing wrong with him. Then they added fuel to the fire when they said, "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" (Acts 23:9b NlrV) Then their arguing became violent and the commanding Roman officer "was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by those who were arguing. So he ordered the soldiers to go down and take him away from them by force." (Acts 23:10 NlrV) They took him back to the fort.

Paul's life had been threatened by the high priest as well as the Sadducees in the Sanhedrin. Paul knew things like this would happen, but the Lord comforted Paul. "He said, 'Be brave! You have given witness about me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome.'" (Acts 23:11 NlrV) Rome! Paul had expressed a desire to go to Rome while he was still visiting in Ephesus. He had even written to the believers there, "So I really want to preach the good news also to you who live in Rome." (Romans 1:15 NlrV) Paul would get his wish!

Review

1. What did the Holy Spirit warn Paul would happen in Jerusalem? (imprisonment and suffering)
2. Was Paul obedient? (Yes.)
3. How did Paul address the Sanhedrin? (He spoke the truth.)
4. How did the Lord comfort Paul after he visited the Sanhedrin? (The Lord told Paul that he would have a chance to go to Rome, to give witness of the Lord.)

Next Week
Conspiracy to Kill
Acts 23:12-35

Preschool Lesson

After the Roman soldier let Paul speak to the crowd, he took Paul to a meeting. It was a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. The Sanhedrin was made up of two different kinds of Jewish men, Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees believe that people will rise from the dead. They also believe that there are angels and spirits. The Sadducees don't believe in any of these things.

The Roman commander took Paul to the meeting because he wanted to know what the Jews were charging Paul with. Paul stood before them and told them he was innocent. He told them he had done nothing wrong.

When the leader of the meeting heard Paul say this, he ordered a man standing close to Paul to hit Paul on the mouth! He didn't want Paul to say anything else. Paul called the leader a "pretender," a "white-washed wall." Paul knew that the leader was breaking the law by ordering someone to hit him.

Paul had a plan, though. He could see that the meeting was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees, so he spoke out. "I am a Pharisee. I am the son of a Pharisee. I believe that people will rise from the dead. That's why I am on trial." (Acts 23:6 NIV)

Paul's plan worked very well. As soon as he announced that he was a Pharisee, the two groups of the meeting began to argue. "They began to take sides . . . People were causing a lot of trouble and making a lot of noise." (Acts 23:7b, 9a NIV) Some of the Pharisees claimed to find nothing wrong with Paul. Their arguing became violent and the commanding Roman officer "was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by those who were arguing. So he ordered the soldiers to go down and take him away from them by force." (Acts 23:10 NIV) They took him back to the fort.

The Lord comforted Paul, though. He said, "Be brave! You have talked about me in Jerusalem. Now do the same in Rome." Rome! Paul wanted to go to Rome. He had even written to the believers there, "So I really want to preach the good news also to you who live in Rome." (Romans 1:15 NIV) Paul would get his wish!

Activities

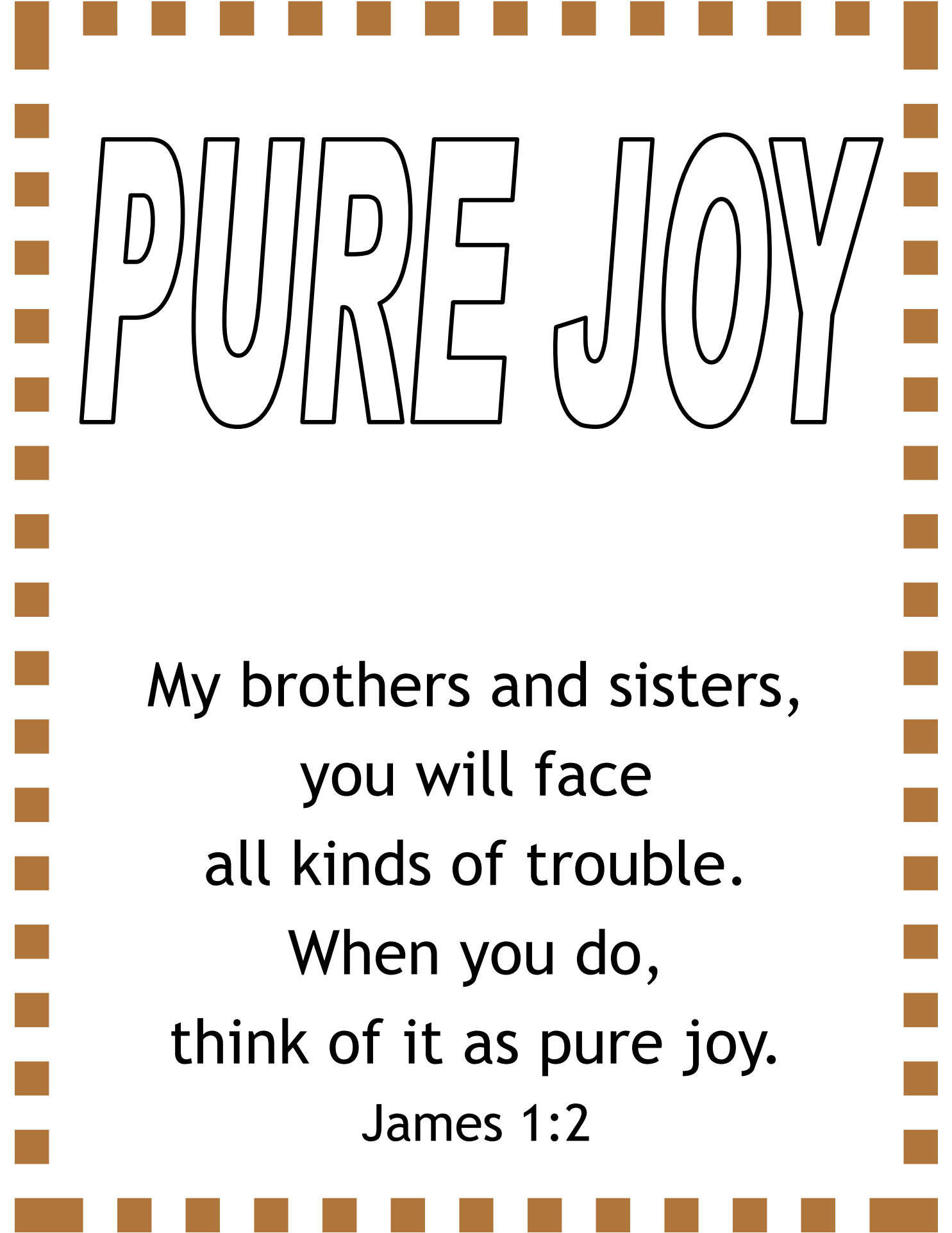
Memory Verse Activity - Write phrases (or individual words) of the memory verse on large craft sticks or tongue depressors. Allow your students time to order the verse and practice saying it several times. Discuss the verses that follow (James 1:3-4) as well.

Sing “I Will Run the Race,” “Be Patient,” “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go,” “No Excuse,” “The Lord Has a Will,” “Every Move I Make” and “Trust and Obey.”

Do you remember what Paul called the high priest after he ordered that Paul be hit on the mouth? Paul called him a pretender. Synonyms for pretender include hypocrite and white-washed wall. When a wall has been white-washed, you can’t always see the dirt underneath. It is simply a quick fix for a problem. Talk about integrity and doing what is right, even if you are the one in charge.

Bring something silver to class. Talk about the refinement process.

As you continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-3, encourage your students to illustrate the verses. They might even want to do comic strip frames for each segment of the verses.



PURE JOY

My brothers and sisters,
you will face
all kinds of trouble.

When you do,
think of it as pure joy.

James 1:2

Word Search

e e s i r a h p r u l y n i h
r n s w t a i p p a l u r o c
e s e e c u d d a s s a a o e
w o n m r r e d n e t e r p a
s u w w o e g n n h y t o h t
n a h a l r r r e a l i s a c
a h i y s i n n t d s r a r e
n e t s i h s i r g n c e i p
a m e l a s u r e j e o r s s
p w w h i t e w a r g p h e e
r r a r i d c u h r a y r e r
e i s a n h e d r i n h o s h
t e h a h u o y e p o h s h t
e i e d c p a i i l d s e p i
n a d y s a d u c e e e s e w

Paul

Jerusalem

Sanhedrin

Pharisees

Sadducees

white-washed

pretender

hypocrite

share in Rome

Word Search

e e s i r a h p r u l y n i h
r n s w t a i p p a l u r o c
e s e e c u d d a s s a a o e
w o n m r r e d n e t e r p a
s u w w o e g n n h y t o h t
n a h a l r r r e a l i s a c
a h i y s i n n t d s r a r e
n e t s i h s i r g n c e i p
a m e l a s u r e j e o r s s
p w w h i t e w a r g p h e e
r r a r i d c u h r a y r e r
e i s a n h e d r i n h o s h
t e h a h u o y e p o h s h t
e i e d c p a i i l d s e p i
n a d y s a d u c e e e s e w

Paul

Jerusalem

Sanhedrin

Pharisees

Sadducees

white-washed

pretender

hypocrite

share in Rome