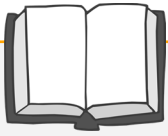


GOD'S GOT THIS

3. Paul - Trapped! SECONDARY



Bible Passage

Acts 24:24-27; 28:16; 28:30-31



Aim

For many young people living under restrictions, the feeling will be that there will be so much that they cannot do. This session aims to address those feelings by pointing them to Paul's example and consider if his life was pointless or if he used his time under lockdown well?



You will need

Projection capabilities to display the resources on the 'flashbulb memories' website

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Explain to the group the idea of a **flashbulb memory**.

When a flashbulb goes off in our eyes as a photograph is taken the memory of that flashbulb stays in our eyes for a while.

A flashbulb memory is a moment that has such a big impact on us it is like a photograph being taken in our minds.

- ◆ We will remember where we were and what we were doing
- ◆ The moment might be very personal to us and our families or it might be something that many people around the world experience together
- ◆ The moment might be a happy memory (e.g. a family wedding or receiving a birthday gift) or it might be a sad memory (e.g. the death of a pet or getting separated from people)

Look at some of the flashbulb memories listed on the website below, some positive and some negative, that many people in the world experienced together. Why do the group think these are moments that have left a lasting memory on those who lived through the events?

blog.myheritage.com/2018/04/flashbulb-memories-10-historic-events-that-everyone-remembers

Can anyone remember where they were and what they were doing when Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on the night of Monday 23rd March 2020 that the United Kingdom was being put into lockdown? From then until now does anyone have positive or negative flashbulb memories of the lockdown period in Scotland?

BIBLE (10 minutes)

For many people in the lockdown period they might have felt like they were trapped. What guidance and help does the Bible give about God helping us in these times?

Outline the background context that Paul has been arrested in Jerusalem because he was preaching the good news of Jesus and a plot to kill him was discovered. This leads to Paul being transferred by Roman guards from Jerusalem to Caesarea on the west coast of Samaria, where Felix is the ruling governor. The case against Paul is heard by Felix and then Felix allows Paul to defend himself.

Read Acts 24:22-27

After two years Paul is finally taken to Rome where he finds himself under another house arrest.

Read Acts 28:16; 28:30-31

Paul had an incredible life story to tell. He found himself in danger many times and he was hated to the point where people were wanting to kill him. At different points in his journeys Paul is arrested, put in jail and as seen in these verses he finds himself under house arrest on two different occasions. You could say that Paul was placed in lockdown for four years!

Discuss this question – If Scotland had gone through four years of lockdown instead of four months would that have been a positive experience, negative experience or a bit of both for you?

Look together again at the above passages to see how Paul spent his four years of lockdown. It starts with Paul being able to tell Felix and his wife the good news of Jesus (Acts 24:24). It was like a mini Bible study or SU Group for Felix during the time Paul spent there under house arrest. Paul is clear about telling Felix the difficult news of God's judgment and the importance of self-control. He took every opportunity he had to speak about Jesus boldly

and clearly to Felix, every time he was called upon.

Fast forward to Rome and Paul finds himself in another lockdown but this time he has many visitors and yet again in Acts 28:31 Paul is, "... boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus." Paul would have had many visitors from every walk of life as Rome was the capital of the world at this point in history. He also used his time during lockdown in Rome to write letters that we now have in the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. His time was not wasted.

If lockdown in one form or another happened to us again there would be many things we are not allowed to do. However, we might find ourselves being provided with opportunities to share the gospel with someone close to us on a one to one basis like a family member or a friend. Like Paul did with Felix. Or we could have opportunities to boldly and clearly share the good news with a wider audience. Online church services on YouTube and Christian podcasts have gained more popularity in 2020 and they help us reach a wider group of people who we might not know or ever meet in person.

Paul would have had so many flashbulb moments in life: the arrests, the times in jail, the shipwrecks and the house arrests. He could have easily been discouraged by them, those 'what's the point in me carrying on?' moments but instead, turned them into positive opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.

CHAT (13 minutes)

Sessions like this are an excellent opportunity to see how your group of young people are coping and it allows them to express what they are experiencing. Allow enough time in the session for good conversation. These questions could be used as a guide.

- ◆ Paul's life was not pointless. When might we feel like our life is just tough? What would Paul say to us if we visited him during one of his lockdown experiences?

- ◆ If you were faced with another lockdown in your lifetime, what would you do differently in terms of how you spent your time in comparison to the 2020 lockdown?
- ◆ If you are a Christian, who might you want to share the Good News of Jesus with one-to-one? And what could you do to reach a wider audience? Remember some will welcome the news (like in Rome) but others will reject it (like Felix).

PRAY (2 minute)

Read Colossians 2:2-4

Explain to the group that Paul wrote these words to Christians in a place called Colossae while he was under lockdown in Rome. Use them as part of a prayer to finish the session.

- ◆ Give thanks for the good flashbulb memories we have got from the lockdown period in Scotland
- ◆ Pray for the young people who have found the lockdown period in Scotland particularly difficult
- ◆ Pray that God gives us opportunities to tell other people about Jesus