

# ***You're Under Arrest***



After a hard good-bye to the Ephesian elders, Paul sets off for Jerusalem, touching base with other believers as he goes. Repeatedly, and sometimes graphically, Paul is urged not to go to Jerusalem because certain arrest and persecution await him there. But Paul won't be talked out of it. And sure enough, his enemies try to beat him to death there. The only thing that stops them is his arrest (and chaining) by Roman soldiers.



*(Needed: Dice; small candies or pretzels)*

Play a game to see how much risk your group members are willing to take. Take turns throwing a die. Give individuals one piece of candy (like an M&M) or a pretzel for each dot they get—unless they throw a six. Once they throw a six, they have to give back all the loot they've collected. Kids can stop at any time and eat their winnings, or they can risk it all on additional throws. Play several rounds. See who can collect the largest amount. Today we'll see how Paul kept going, even though he knew it was risky.

DATE I USED THIS SESSION \_\_\_\_\_ GROUP I USED IT WITH \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. What's one of the biggest risks you've ever taken? For the most part, are you a risk taker or a risk avoider? Why?**

**2. Paul had spent almost three years in Ephesus, which was about as long as he had ever stayed in one place. What thoughts were probably going through his mind (vss. 1-9)?** (Paul probably had mixed emotions. He may have wanted to spend time building up the Christians wherever he went, yet he was also eager to get back to Jerusalem, his "home base." It must have been difficult to keep getting churches started and then leaving them behind. [Note: The "we" perspective in this account is not from Paul, but from the writer of Acts, Luke.]

**3. If you had been traveling with Paul, how would you have felt after the event that took place at Philip's house (vss. 8-11)?** (The Holy Spirit doesn't make mistakes. A prophecy of danger would certainly come true.) **How did the people there respond (vs. 12)?** (They were afraid for Paul.)

**4. If you had been Paul, would you have gone ahead with your plans?** (Let students respond.) **This had not been the first prediction of danger for Paul—it was one of several (20:22, 23; 21:4). How did it affect Paul's plans (vss. 13, 14)?** (Paul was no stranger to persecution. He had already "died" to himself in order to live for Jesus, so he was not scared away from what he felt was his ministry.)

**5. Do you think Paul was going against God's will (to continue to Jerusalem after the prophecy by Agabus)?** (No. Rather, he felt God's leading to go to Jerusalem [20:22-23]. The prophecy was just to alert him and the others to what was going to happen.)

**6. Upon reaching Jerusalem, what news did Paul have for his friends there (vss. 15-19)?** (He wanted them to know how God was working in all the places he had been—particularly among the Gentiles.)

**7. What news did Paul's friends have for him (vs. 20)?** (Thousands of Jews had become believers in Jesus as well.)

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**8. What problem did Paul have to contend with right away (vss. 21-26)?** (Because Paul's work involved the Gentile people, rumors spread that he was rejecting Mosaic law. To dispel the rumor, Paul took part in a traditional Hebrew ceremony [which would have involved animal sacrifice] with a group of devoted Jews.)

**9. Paul's problems weren't over. Jews from Asia recognized him and began to level false accusations against him. What happened then (vss. 27-31)?** (Before anything could be done, a mob of angry people dragged Paul away and tried to kill him.)

**10. What kept Paul from being killed (vss. 31-36)?** (The Roman soldiers [likely 200 or more] sent to break up the disturbance arrested Paul, bound him in chains [as had been prophesied], and even had to carry him for his own protection.)

**11. The commander of the soldiers who saved him mistook Paul for someone else—an Egyptian terrorist leader. Do you find anything unusual in Paul's response (Acts 21:37-39)?** (Sometimes we tend to deny accusations so strongly that people suspect we have something to hide. But Paul focused on who he was, not who he wasn't. Also, Paul actually asked to talk to the people who had just tried to kill him.)



Paul's address to the crowd is contained in Acts 22. For now, use the reproducible sheet, "Don't Say I Didn't Warn You," to let group members consider if they would willingly go into a situation after being warned specifically of the dangers. When they finish, have them discuss any potentially dangerous situations they may have already experienced because of what they believed. If possible, have a few true stories at hand about people who "paid the price" for their faith—such as missionary Jim Elliot, who died at the hands of the Auca Indians in Peru. Then let students debate: "With proper planning, is it possible to avoid most dangerous situations and still lead a strong Christian life?"

# Don't Say I Didn't Warn You



Warnings are frequently helpful things. If you're cruising down the road, and you suddenly see a sign that reads, "DANGER: BRIDGE OUT," you'd be pretty foolish to keep zipping along and pay no attention. But other warnings may keep us from doing things that would be pretty thrilling. Read through the "for instances" below and describe how you would be likely to respond in each case.

**1** You're at an amusement park that has the scariest roller coaster in the state. Someone died on it (although he was goofing off) last summer. While you're standing in line, you notice a sign warning you of the dangers of this ride (you have to be so tall, can't have any heart conditions or epilepsy, don't wear glasses or hats, etc.). What do you do?

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**2** You're at the beach and it's a perfect day. You can't wait to go out into the surf. Then you see a lifeguard posting a sign warning that sharks were recently spotted in this area. What do you do?

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**3** You go along with some friends to a place that offers bungee jumping. Before you're allowed to jump, you're given a form saying that the management of the operation isn't responsible for any deaths or injuries. What do you do?

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**4** You have an opportunity to go to Haiti on a four-week missions trip this summer. Your mother warns you about all the health risks there and says you shouldn't drink the water. You hear on the news that there's some political unrest there. Then you read about all the voodoo worship that takes place in some of the villages. To top it all off, your best friend says, "Why would you want to waste your summer doing that?" What do you do?

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**5** A new kid moves to your school, and doesn't seem to make friends very easily. You're thinking about asking this new person to come to your youth group's next social event. But a friend says, "No way. Haven't you heard? This kid just transferred from a reform school. We're talking serious bad news." What do you do?

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