

Here Comes The Bribe



Paul finally gets his “day in court” as Ananias, the high priest, brings charges before Felix, the governor of Judea. In spite of the false accusations brought against him, Paul’s defense is sound. Yet Felix is slow to reach a verdict because he wants to receive a bribe. Paul is kept in a loose kind of house arrest for a couple of years until Felix is succeeded by Festus—Paul’s next judge.



Use the reproducible sheet, “What’s It Worth to Ya?” to see how far your kids will go to get clues to some puzzling riddles. Since your kids won’t be seeing this, you don’t really need to copy it. Read a riddle, and then have kids “bribe” you for clues. Give them just one clue at a time. Maybe they’ll offer you some money, or food, or a promise to do you a favor. Once someone knows the solution to a riddle, have him or her tell you privately instead of announcing it to the rest of the group. This will keep the others in suspense longer. In order to solve the riddle of what to do about Paul, the judge (Felix) was hoping Paul would bribe him.

DATE I USED THIS SESSION _____ GROUP I USED IT WITH _____

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME _____



1. If life is like a courtroom, who do you most identify with at this point in your life: the person on trial, a lawyer, a judge, a member of the jury, the court reporter, an onlooker, or someone else? Why?

2. Paul had been hastily whisked out of town to avoid a secret plot involving more than forty people sworn to kill him (23:12-14). But he had to wait around in protective custody until his accusers arrived. When they got there (five days later) and the trial began, what was one of the first tactics of the prosecutor (vss. 1-4)? (He blatantly tried to “butter up” the judge.) Can you think of any similar tactics (flattery, etc.) used by young people to try to get what they want? (Trying to impress teachers; giving compliments, hoping to receive them in return, etc.)

3. When Ananias and his lawyer finally got finished trying to impress the judge, what charges did they bring against Paul (vss. 5-9)? Were they true? (If not outright lies, they were exaggerated. Riots had taken place in response to Paul’s teachings, but he certainly didn’t stir up the people intentionally. He had been accused of desecrating the Jewish temple, but it wasn’t true. And he was a leader of the Christian movement, but “ringleader” was an inflammatory word.)

4. When people have gotten upset with you, how have they exaggerated the truth and made your actions sound worse than they really were? How have you done this?

5. What can you learn from Paul’s presentation of his defense after these exaggerated charges (vss. 10-21)? (Point by point he calmly clarified the truth about each charge. It does little good to lose control or respond with nonproductive anger.)

6. Why wasn’t Paul’s case resolved right away (vss. 22, 23)? (Felix first said he wanted to wait for the commander who had previously rescued Paul to arrive and testify.)

7. But there was another reason. What was it (vss. 24-26)? (Felix was hoping Paul would offer him a big bribe. Later, in their frequent talks, Paul had several opportunities to present the Gospel.)

8. What are some ways that young people “bribe” each other or other people? (Pick up the tab in restaurants to impress the group; get gifts for others in an attempt to “buy” friends, etc.)

9. Since Paul never bribed Felix, the governor never got around to making a ruling on the case. Two years later Felix was replaced (vs. 27), and Paul remained in prison. What kinds of spiritual “jobs” do you tend to put off, hoping that someone will do them for you or offer you a “bribe” to do them?



Discuss whether group members would attempt the following “bribes.”

- **Saying some nice words to a police officer who pulled you over for speeding.**

- **Slipping a few dollars to a foreign customs agent (at his request) to speed up your departure, thereby avoiding unforeseen delays.**

- **Buttering up a teacher in hopes of improving your grade.**

- **Giving a restaurant hostess a five dollar “advance tip” in order to get the best seat in the house for your big date.**

Then discuss: **Do you think it’s always wrong to take or receive bribes? Read Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; 27:25. Can you think of anything you do that encourages others to bribe you in some way? If so, what should you do about it?**

What's it Worth to Ya?

RIDDLE #1

It has lakes, but no fish; forests, but no trees; and cities, but no houses. What is it?

Clues:

1. It's NEWS to me. [That stands for north, south, east, and west—but don't tell them that!]
2. Go ask Charles Atlas.
3. Fold it right there.
4. Have you checked your glove compartment?

Solution: A map

RIDDLE #3

What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but not once in a thousand years?

Clues:

1. It's toward the middle. [Of the alphabet, that is—but don't let on!]
2. Some people follow the letter of the law, not the spirit.
3. Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe would know.
4. Want some M&Ms?

Solution: The letter "M"

RIDDLE #5

You meet two guys who look identical. You ask if they're twins and they tell you they're not. But you find out that they have the same mother, and were born on the same day. You figure they must be lying, but they aren't. How is that possible?

Clues:

1. Think, think, think! [Three is the important number here—but that's for you to know and them to find out!]
2. See how they run!
3. Almost a homer.
4. They're three of a kind.

Solution: They're two members of triplets.

RIDDLE #2

The man who made it didn't want it; the man who wanted it didn't use it; the man who used it didn't know it. What is it?

Clues:

1. Don't Count me in. [A reference to Count Dracula—but let them figure it out!]
2. I'm scared stiff.
3. Let's bury the hatchet.
4. People are dying to get into one of these.

Solution: A coffin

RIDDLE #4

In the town of Seville, there are two rules: (1) No man ever shaves himself—they all let the barber do it. (2) No man is allowed to grow a beard. There's only one barber in town, so who shaves the barber?

Clues:

1. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. [No one—get it? But don't give it away yet!]
2. The barber does own a razor.
3. The barber has a niece, but isn't an uncle.
4. The barber's husband is a real nice guy.

Solution: No one shaves the barber—she's a woman.