

Agrippa-ing Testimony



As Governor Festus hosts King Agrippa, they both give Paul a hearing. Paul shares with them his past—both his Jewish upbringing and his conversion to Christianity. And even though Festus suspects Paul of being crazy and Agrippa is resistant to Paul’s message, neither of the rulers feels that Paul has done anything for which he deserves to die.



(Needed: Wild clothes; marshmallows; phone book)

Show up in the wildest, most mismatched outfit you can put together. Solemnly give each person a marshmallow and explain that it is a rare, alien spore that kids should carry with them always because it has amazing, mysterious powers. Offer to read your text before you start discussing it; then start reading from the phone book. In other words, do whatever you can to get kids saying that you’ve gone crazy. Then explain that in this chapter, Paul was accused of being insane—but without good reason.

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

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME _____



1. What was a story that you never got tired of hearing as a child? Do you have any stories that you still like to hear over and over? Why do you think some things get boring when you hear them too often, and others seem to get better and better? (Usually the stories that ignite our hopes and dreams can be new with each retelling. Other stories just get repetitive.)

2. One story that Paul never seemed to get tired of telling was of his conversion on the road to Damascus. This is the third time the account is presented in Acts. (See also chapters 9 and 22.) Why do you think Paul kept telling this story? (It showed the power of Jesus to change lives, and it provided the basis for everything Paul did from that point forward.)

3. Many of today's powerful testimonies seem to involve former Satanists, drug users, or other "big" sinners who received Christ. What kind of life had Paul led before converting to Christianity (vss. 1-5)? (He was a Pharisee—one of the people most committed to observing Jewish law. He had also been a major persecutor of Christians.)

4. What was the big difference between Paul the Pharisee and the Pharisees who refused to accept the teachings of Jesus (vss. 6-8)? (The Old Testament included numerous prophecies of God's future kingdom and the coming Messiah. Paul saw that Jesus had been the fulfillment of these predictions. The other Pharisees didn't.)

5. Sometimes as we grow, we hate to admit what kind of people we used to be. Was Paul this way (vss. 9-11)? Explain. (No. Paul was very open about his past. And it was exactly this contrast between "then" and "now" that made his testimony so effective. The more honest we are about our previous sinfulness, the more powerful will be our expression of Jesus' forgiveness of those sins.)

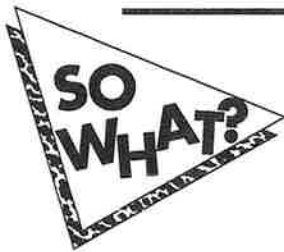
6. So Paul explained the vision he had (vss. 12-18) and how he had responded to it (vss. 19-23). Festus, the governor, responded to Paul's presentation with the comment that Paul must have gone insane (vs. 24). What can we

learn from Paul's reply (vss. 25-27)? (The existence of Jesus is historical fact. People don't have to agree with or respond to His teachings, but the facts can't be dismissed as meaningless.)

7. Most of Paul's comments had been addressed to King Agrippa. What was the king's response to Paul (vss. 26-28)? (In spite of Paul's logic, Agrippa didn't seem willing to make a personal decision. He sidestepped the issue, yet gave no indication that he could argue with what Paul had said.)

8. What do you make of Paul's response to King Agrippa's question (vs. 29)? (Paul didn't answer his question either, but makes a sincere statement of his wish that all those listening would become Christians someday, but not be put in prison for it.) **How do you feel about people who reject your Christian beliefs?**

9. Both Festus and Agrippa knew that the Jewish leaders wanted Paul dead, and they wanted the support of those leaders. Yet what conclusion did they reach about Paul (vss. 30-32)? (They found no reason to convict him of any crime. In fact, they would have released him if Paul himself hadn't wanted to present his case [and the message of the Gospel] to Caesar.)



The reproducible sheet, "Brush with Royalty," will put kids in a situation somewhat similar to Paul's imprisonment and contact with the leaders of the Roman Empire. When they finish, discuss their responses and point out how patient Paul was in this situation. Discuss: **Can you think of a situation or a person that you feel you've "put up with" long enough? How does it compare with what Paul went through? If you "lose patience" in your situation, what might the results be?** Point out that sometimes we must stop putting up with something—when we or others are endangered by sexual or other abuse, for instance. But most of the time our angry responses won't accomplish what patience could (see James 1:19, 20). Have kids pray individually or in small groups for the kind of patience Paul had, which can only come from God.

Brush WITH Royalty

Oops. As you and your family happen to be driving through the new foreign country of Doomeria, you stop for gas. You decide to go for a short walk. Less than two minutes later, a young Doomster (a native) runs up with a policeman and says in perfect English, "That's the one! That's the person who took all my money." The policeman immediately drives you to the nearest prison.



(They apparently aren't big on civil rights in this country.) You are to be tried at once—before the king of Doomeria, no less. "At once" turns out to be in over two years. How would you respond to the king's following interrogation questions?

(1) How do you like it here in our country?

- You call this a country?! I call it a police state, you ruthless dictator!
- No comment. I demand to see a lawyer.
- It's very beautiful, though I can't say much for the honesty of its citizens.
- Other: _____

(2) What have you to say for yourself in regard to these charges?

- Hey, you're crazy, man. Like, you've got the wrong person.
- No comment. I demand to see a lawyer.
- The charges are completely false. I didn't steal anything.
- Other: _____

(3) We didn't find the stolen goods during your strip search. Do you have accomplices in our country?

- I'm with my family. We're close friends of the president of the United States. My mother is a senator and my father, uh, makes nuclear warheads for a living. And boy, will they be mad if I'm not returned to them soon.
- No comment. I demand to see a lawyer.
- I was traveling with my family before I was abducted by the policeman.
- Other: _____

(4) As you may know, Doomeria is an atheist country. If you share our view, things will probably go easier for you.

- Where do I sign up?
- No comment. I demand to see a pastor.
- I'm a Christian. May I tell you why?
- Other: _____

(5) What else do you have to say for yourself that might persuade me to release you?