

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God’s people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God’s Word**—that we don’t just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You’ll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory “**Launch**” section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following “**Learn & Live**” section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The “**Leave**” section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don’t neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don’t force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

PAUL'S PRISON PROTECTION

The Plot
to Kill Paul
Acts 23:12–24
AD 55

BIBLE TRUTH

God protects us from our enemies.

LEARNER GOAL

I can consider different ways in the text and in my life that God protects His people from enemies.

BIBLE VERSE

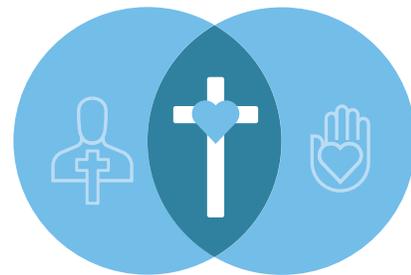
Deliver me from my enemies, O my God. Psalm 59:1

LAW & GOSPEL

The world hates Jesus and those like me who follow Him. **Christ has overcome the world and is with me to the end of the age.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

When Paul's nephew overhears a plot by the Jews to assassinate Paul, he tells Paul, who tells his prison guards. They take the young man to the Roman tribune, who takes action to protect Paul from the plot. Now guarded by at least 470 soldiers, spearmen, and horsemen, Paul is safely moved to Caesarea to await a hearing before Governor Felix.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God uses authorities to protect and keep me safe from harm and danger.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can support and encourage those who work to keep me safe.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can consider different ways in the text and in my life that God protects His people from enemies.

YOUTH

I can relate God's protection of Paul in the text to His protection of His people today.

ELEMENTARY

I understand God protects us from our enemies.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God protects me and helps me do His work.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read Acts 21 and 22 in *TLSB* with study notes for more context.

IN DEPTH Read the Fifth Commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)*.



LEADER NOTE

Strangers help us all the time, but it is not often that we actually consider them the hands and feet of God as they serve as His means for keeping order in the world. In the lesson, your learners will see how God continually guarded Paul through unusual people. Encourage them to consider how God still works through others and through us to maintain peace in the world.



BONUS ACTIVITY

The text of the first section of this lesson, Acts 22:30–23:11, is not part of the official narrative of this lesson of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum, but was included in this Adult Download to add more context to the official text, Acts 23:12–24. Even so, there is much more context to be explored. Consider taking some time at the beginning of this lesson to walk through Paul's third missionary journey in the text or on a map to help build the narrative of what leads Paul to this point.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

Consider a time when a stranger either protected you from danger or got you out of trouble. Did you consider this the work of God at the time? Why or why not?

LEARN & LIVE

ACTS 22:30–23:11

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Paul concludes his third missionary journey by bringing the collection from the Gentile congregations to aid the Jerusalem Church. As had been prophesied about him (Acts 21:10–14), Paul knows full well that his journey will lead him into great peril and danger. Even so, Paul goes to Jerusalem willing to take up his cross and follow Jesus even unto death. While in Jerusalem, Paul is arrested in the temple, and after Paul's rousing sermon in the temple, the mob seeks to kill him. Paul is saved, however, by a Roman tribune who upon learning of Paul's Roman citizenship is now afraid. He, a Roman official, has unjustly bound a Roman citizen without trial, a great offense. So, the next day and with added protection, the tribune gathers together an informal meeting of the Sanhedrin council and the high priest, a cruel man named Ananias (not the same Ananias from earlier in Acts). Paul demonstrates both his boldness and his humility to the high priest. Then, seeing the uneasy alliance between the conservative-leaning Pharisees and the liberal-leaning Sadducees, Paul declares himself a Pharisee who is bound due to his belief and hope in the resurrection of the dead. This ignites an uproar, as the theme of the resurrection had been a major divide between the two groups, with Paul now being defended by the resurrection-believing Pharisees. The uproar turns violent, and the tribune must forcefully remove Paul from the situation for his own protection. For all intents and purposes, Paul's history as a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians, along with his unabashed proclamation of the Gospel, combined with his Roman citizenship, make his presence in Jerusalem a powder keg. Even so, Christ comes to him at night, telling him to take courage, comforting him with the reality that he will be Christ's messenger to Rome. Through the twisting political and religious landscape, God is working out His plan of salvation. He will continue to use the Roman system, and Paul's Roman citizenship, to allow Paul to continue to proclaim Christ in Jerusalem and even to the ends of the earth.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Looking over the text, why is Paul in danger here, and what is the significance of this event? What should we in the Church today learn from what is happening here in God's plan of salvation?

REFLECTION HELPS

Paul is in danger because he has continually preached Christ and embarrassed the religious leaders. Paul points to the core of this controversy by saying he is on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and his witness will lead him all the way to Rome. Today we know that God's Word will often be unpopular, and may even lead to persecution and suffering for God's Church, yet we continually preach and cling to the hope of eternal life in Christ.

ACTS 23:12–15

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Paul is still in the custody of the Roman officer, and those who hate Paul know that the Sanhedrin has no power to condemn anyone to death, much less a Roman citizen. So, Paul's haters plan the extreme: assassination. A group of forty, large enough to finish the assassination even if many were stopped in the attempt, make a rash oath to not eat until they have killed Paul, and they seek the assent of the chief priests and elders in their plot. This likely does not include the entire council, as the Pharisees who had just defended Paul would not agree to such a plot, but instead involves a shadowy group of wicked religious leaders. As the last meeting with the tribune had been in the relative protection of the lower hall of the fortress, for the assassination to actually work this time, Paul would have to be in a more open and exposed place. The religious leaders agree to send a message to the tribune that their next meeting to decide Paul's fate should be in their regular meeting chambers. Even here Satan has influenced the highest levels of Jewish leadership to agree to deception and murder, yet God is not finished with Paul and will protect him from his enemies. Thanks be to God, Jesus protects us from the eternal consequences of sin, the lasting effect of death, and the deceptions of the devil.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Identify some striking details from this section that reveal the extent that Paul's haters during this time were willing to go to oppose him. Are there any similarities to how Satan attacks the Church today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Details include conspiring to assassinate, getting the consent of religious leaders in the plot, and carefully planning out the route. Satan, the ancient enemy, is clever and cunning in his attempts to lure God's people away from the faith.

ACTS 23:16–24

BIBLE COMMENTARY

God continues to care for and protect Paul by placing the right person in the right place at the right time. Somehow Paul's nephew hears of the conspiracy and goes to warn Paul. Though not certain from the text, it seems that Paul may have had a sister who lived in Jerusalem, which might account for Paul's housing during his youth learning under Gamaliel. Regardless, Paul's nephew reports to Paul, who brings him to the tribune. The Roman officer listens and escorts Paul out of the city at night with a sizable guard.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What is so remarkable about the way that Paul is saved from certain death here? Consider your own vocations, or roles, in life. What is one special way you can plan on serving as God's hands and feet in caring for or protecting others this week?

REFLECTION HELPS

God put Paul's nephew at just the right place and the right time to hear the news, and then used the Roman tribune to escort Paul out of the city to safety. Likewise, God can use us in our vocations to care for the needs of others.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

What are some different ways, in the text and in your life, that God protects His people from enemies?

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

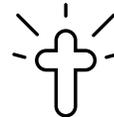
CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

One of the main points of this lesson is that God usually uses others as His instruments to keep order in both the world and in our lives. If time allows, consider either looking over or pointing your learners to the Fourth Commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017), focusing especially on the doctrine of vocation.



CHRIST CONNECTION

By His life, suffering, and death, Christ protects His people from the ancient enemies of sin, death, and the devil.



LEADER NOTE

God provided protection for Paul through the soldiers and his nephew, but also comfort to him through His Word. Today God continues to protect us from earthly threats through people, and He protects us from sin, death, and the devil through His Word.

