

Courage and Resilience A Bible Story

Read the story. Answer the questions. Write the prayer.

Introduction: doing something new

Have you ever tried to explain a new way of doing things, to other people? It can be difficult, because some people will say, 'It can't be done!' Others will say, 'We tried that, and it doesn't work.' Or they could even say, 'We just don't like it.'

Sometimes we need to show resilience – guts, grit and determination – to overcome that kind of reaction.

This story is all about that. Two thousand years ago, the first Christians travelled hundreds of miles to share the Jesus story with the different peoples of the Roman Empire. Sometimes people were glad to hear it, and sometimes they weren't. Find out what happened in Ephesus.

A Bible story based on Acts 19:23–41

The ancient Greeks had many gods and goddesses. Here's Artemis, goddess of motherhood. She was the patron goddess of the Greek city of Ephesus, in Turkey. (The Romans called her Diana.)

Many pilgrims would come to worship at her temple in Ephesus (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), and then buy souvenirs of their trip to take home, especially statues of her image.



But beliefs can change, and when Christianity started spreading across the Roman Empire, this worried some people. When the apostle Paul came to Ephesus, many local people became Christians. But then, this happened...

Most days, Paul would go to the local marketplace or meeting rooms to say, 'You don't need to follow all these other gods. Jesus will show you the way to the one true God.'

Some local people said, 'What's going on?' Some said, 'That's not for me!' But others said, 'Tell me more!'

This happened for over two years.

But then along came Demetrius. He was a silversmith, making statues of Artemis to sell to all the pilgrims visiting the city. One day, he called a big meeting for everyone doing the same sort of thing and said, 'Oi, Ephesus!

We're going to lose money on this! Paul's telling our customers that gods made with hands are not gods. That's going to drive us out of business! People will stop coming to our amazing temple to worship Artemis! Come on, Ephesus! What do we think about that?'

The crowd became enraged, crying out, 'Great is Artemis, goddess of our city!' The crowd got bigger, and then it marched off to the local theatre, where they had all the big public gatherings, chanting, 'Great is Artemis, goddess of our city!'



Furious, they grabbed two of Paul's new Christian friends and held them prisoner, saying and pointing, 'Great is Artemis, goddess of our city!' It was all getting rather scary.

Paul heard about this, and dashed along to theatre, saying, 'Let me go and talk to the crowd.' But his other friends said, 'Don't be

daft!'

Inside, it was getting a bit confusing. Some people cried out one thing, some another, but it was all getting a bit strange. Most didn't even know why they were there. Some even tried selling food to the angry crowd.

Finally, the town clerk arrived to try to calm things down. He stood up in front of the crowd, saying, 'Listen, everybody! We've got the greatest temple in the world here. And Artemis is definitely the greatest, isn't she? So these people aren't dangerous, are they? If you've got a problem with them, take them to court and prove it. But if there's a riot, we'll be in deep trouble! So now, just go home!'

Afterwards, Paul called his friends over, saying, 'I think our work here is done!' So, they moved on to another city.

If you go to Ephesus today, 2,000 years later, you can see the ruins of the great temple of Artemis. Paul? His message about Jesus just carried on spreading from city to city, then off around the whole world. Today, nearly one-third of all the people in the world call themselves Christian!



Answer these questions.

- What did you like about the story?
- What are your most interesting questions about it?
- I wonder what you'd like to say to those people who didn't want Paul and his new ideas.

But today, but there are still places where Christians (and others) are persecuted because of their faith. Sometimes, just talking about Jesus can get them put in prison or worse. But they still do it, because they believe in sharing their faith and beliefs, even when life is difficult. That's resilience. Like Paul and his friends, they don't give up, even when life hurts.

I wonder... where do you and I need to show a little resilience this week?

Describe it for me, either in writing, a poem or a picture with some key words.

Here is a prayer about resilience and courage.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you know what it's like when people don't want to hear something new. Please give me – give us all – the courage to say the right thing and do the right thing, even when it's difficult. Amen

Now **write** a prayer of your own about resilience. Write it out in your best handwriting and decorate. You could share it with a family member.