

The Case of the Confused Christians*Colossians***Story-telling Tips**

Ahead of time:

1. Read the Bible verses and story. Pray!
2. Choose story action cues and prepare storyboard figures/Story Scenes, if using. (In Visual Aids book)
3. Practice telling story with the storyboard figures/Story Scenes, timing your presentation. Shorten, if necessary.

During your presentation:

1. Maintain as much eye contact as possible as you tell the story.
2. Put up storyboard figures/add story action cues/hold up Story Scenes as you tell the story. Allow the children to help you put them on the board, if desired.
3. Include the children in your story with a few questions about what they think will happen or words/concepts that might be new to them.
4. Watch the kids for signs that their attention span has been reached. Shorten, if necessary.

INTRODUCTION/ LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

"Our story is called: The Case of the Confused Christians. Here is your listening assignment." Read from Detective Dan's Listening Assignment signs, but questions are summarized below:

Detective Dan's Lesson #1 Listening Assignment:

I need to find out:

1. **Where were teachers teaching bad things to believers? What were they confused about?**
2. **What book could help them know the truth?**

Detective Dan's Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is Deuteronomy 8:3:**

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

I need to find out:

1. **What was bad about the teachers in Colossae?**
2. **What book could the believers read to help them know how to know how to live for God?**

Detective Dan's Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:

I found six clues, but only 4 of them are in the story.

They are: a rabbit, a bad teacher, God's Word, a magic stone, a "bad" food, and a tree.

Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.

I need to figure out:

1. **Which four belong in our story?**
2. **Who asked God to help the believers in Colossae? What did he ask God to do?**

Read the assignment questions, THEN SAY,

"Ok, Deep Down Detectives! Put on your best listening ears and see if you can hear the answers to Detective Dan's questions. When I finish telling the story, we will see if we can answer all the questions."

*Read the Bible Truth story, answer questions, present the gospel and lead in prayer.**Answers to questions; the gospel; and, ACTS prayer are included with the story text.*

The Case of the Confused Christians *Colossians*

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics) Numbers correspond to storyboard pictures and placement upon the storyboard. Always feel free to use less pictures, if it's best for your kids. Simply black out the numbers next to pictures you do not plan to use. All pictures are found in the Visual Aids book. Put BG (background) pictures on storyboard ahead of time. SB pictures (listed below in story text) are added to board as you tell the story. These numbers are also found on the back of each picture. Tip: Stack pictures in numerical before telling story for easy use. Use sticky-back velcro to attach pictures to storyboard felt. Use sticky-tac putty to stick a picture on top of another picture. OR, if using the Story Scenes to tell the story, disregard the storyboard picture references listed below.

(SB1) Epaphras packed his things, and away he went. Soon, he would be far from his hometown of Colossae. Why was he leaving home? We don't know exactly. But, we DO know that when Epaphras came back, he was a changed man with a changed life.

Where did these changes happen? Most people think it was in the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus was one of the biggest, most beautiful, most important cities in the world back then. Epaphras would have thought Ephesus was amazing! (SB2) There, Epaphras could see ships harbored on the sparkling sea. (SB3) He could walk among great crowds of people. (SB4) He could see the huge marketplace filled delicious food to eat. (SB5) He could "oohh and ahh" over the beautiful things for sale that sellers from around the world brought in by ship, by donkey and camel. And most amazing of all, (SB6) he could see the magnificent, golden worship place of Artemis, the great goddess of the Ephesians. Her temple towered over the city and shone out like a glittering jewel. It was one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Big city! Good food! Rich things! Glorious worship place! What an exciting trip Epaphras was making! What could be better than this?

Do you think there could be anything better than this?

Now, perhaps Epaphras couldn't think of finding anything better than these wonderful things in Ephesus, but there WAS something far better coming. You see, someone ELSE was also on his way to Ephesus, just like Epaphras. And this someone was bringing something that Epaphras would want more than Ephesus' best-tasting food... SOMETHING he would find worth more than any of the beautiful things for sale... SOMETHING even far more glorious than the glittery golden worship place of Artemis!

(SB7) Paul was the SOMEONE making his way to Ephesus. And the very special SOMETHING he was bringing with him was the Bible, God's Word. Yes, God was about to use His Word and Paul to change Epaphras' life completely!

In the mornings, Paul joined the other buyers and sellers in the marketplace. Some people sold cloth. Some sold food. Others sold little statues of the goddess Artemis. (SB8) Paul made and sold tents.

Selling tents was how Paul made his living, but it was ALSO a great way to talk to people about God's Word and the Savior Jesus. Some were only interested in Paul's tents, but others were interested in Paul's good news.

So every afternoon, after lunch, (SB9) while many Ephesians took naps, (SB10) Paul preached from God's Word in a nearby schoolroom called the Hall of Tyrannus.

(SB11) Epaphras, along with others, must have found his way into Paul's classes on one of these lazy afternoons. "(SB12) God promised in the His Word to send a Savior to save His people from their sins," Paul taught. "That Savior is Jesus. He died on the cross, suffering for their sins in their place. He rose from the grave on the third day, showing that He had really beaten sin and death for God's people. Turn away from your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior and you will be saved. God will make you His dearly-loved people, too!" Paul urged everyone.

(SB13) As Epaphras listened, God's Holy Spirit worked powerfully in his heart. Epaphras believed God's Word. He turned away from his sins and trusted in Jesus as his Savior. Epaphras' life was completely changed!

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

Epaphras didn't just listen to Paul preach God's Word once. He learned from him over and over again. (SB14) Epaphras wanted to learn everything he could from God's Word. He was learning for himself, AND for someone else, too. Can you guess who?

Can you guess?

For the people back home in Colossae! Oh, how they needed to hear about God's Word! How they needed Jesus to be their Savior!

(SB15) There were two kinds of people in Colossae -- Jews and Gentiles – and they all needed to hear what Epaphras was learning. The Jews in Colossae had God's Word already, but they didn't understand God's promises that Jesus would be the Savior. They kept trying to please God by just keeping His laws. That would never work! They could never save themselves! How these Jews needed to hear about God's free gift of salvation through Jesus!

The Gentiles in Colossae needed to hear what Epaphras was learning, too. Epaphras was a Gentile like them. He knew all about the fake gods they worshipped and feared. He knew about the necklaces of stones the Gentiles believed had magical powers to protect them from bad things. Oh, how these Gentiles needed to hear about the LORD, the one, true God. Oh, how they needed to hear about Jesus, God's mighty Son, who broke the power of sin and death! How Epaphras wanted to see them free of their fear and these fake gods!

(SB16) So, Epaphras said goodbye to Paul and headed back home with his exciting message. Away from the sea, back up through the mountains to Colossae, he went.

(SB17) Epaphras spread his good news to all who would listen, both Jew and Gentile. "God promised in His Word to send a Savior to save His people from their sins. That Savior is Jesus," Epaphras told them. "Jesus died on the cross, suffering for the sins of God's people, so they wouldn't have to. Then on the third day, Jesus rose up from the grave, showing that He had really beaten sin and death for God's people," Epaphras exclaimed. "Turn away from your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior, and you will be saved! This is how you can become God's people!" Epaphras urged them all.

What would the Jews think? What would the Gentiles think? Would they believe Epaphras' good news from God's Word?

What do you think?

(SB18) The Holy Spirit worked in many hearts as Epaphras preached from God's Word. He helped the Jews believe that Jesus was the Savior God had promised to send. They stopped trusting in how well they could obey God's laws, and trusted in Jesus as their Savior. The Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of the Gentiles, too. They stopped worshipping their fake gods. They stopped trusting in their magical necklaces. They stopped fearing what bad things might happen to them. They turned away from their sins and trusted in God's mighty Son, Jesus, as their Savior. How happy was Epaphras!

(SB19) Now there were believers in Colossae—a whole, little church! How Epaphras loved these new believers in Colossae! He spent long hours in prayer for them. And each week, as they gathered together, Epaphras taught them from the Bible. Epaphras knew these believers needed to keep on learning God's Word if they were to keep on loving God and living for Him. He knew the Holy Spirit would use God's Word to help these new believers to fight sin and grow stronger in their faith, just like He was helping him.

And oh, how they needed all the help they could get! (SB20) Sometimes, the Jewish believers were tempted to go back to trusting in keeping God's laws again! (SB21) And sometimes, the Gentiles believers were tempted to go back to trusting in fake magical stones to keep them safe!

(SB22) Then, Then, bad teachers came to the little church and made things much worse. "Jesus isn't enough," they taught the believers. "You need to keep those old laws, too. 'Don't eat this food,' 'Don't touch that bad thing!' and other laws like that," they insisted. "Jesus isn't enough to protect you from bad things, either. Put that magical stone back on your neck. Call on angels to help you," they urged the believers.

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

"No! No! No!" exclaimed Epaphras. **"Jesus IS enough!"** he told them. **The believers were confused and so scared. Heeeelp!!!!**

What should they do? Who could help them? Epaphras knew! The same man who had taught him from God's Word in the first place. Can you remember his name?

Can you tell me?

It was Paul! Epaphras would get help from Paul. Maybe the believers would listen to this godly leader.

But uh, oh.... Paul wasn't in Ephesus anymore. (SB23) He was over a thousand miles away in prison in Rome. Paul had gotten in trouble for telling people about Jesus and been thrown in jail as punishment.

Now, a thousand miles away may not seem like a big deal to you, but it was back then. There were no phones, computers, cars, airplanes, or any other quick way to talk to someone who lived faraway like there is today. No, if Epaphras wanted Paul's help, he would have to go to him to get it. It would take Epaphras weeks to get to Rome. What a long, hard trip! But Epaphras loved the Lord, and he loved these new believers in Colossae. He would do whatever it took to help them.

So, all the way to Rome, Epaphras went and (SB24) found Paul. Epaphras found Paul in his little prison house in Rome, and he shared everything that had happened in Colossae. There was so much good news: many Jews and Gentiles had become believers and were growing under the preaching of God's Word. But there was bad news, too. Epaphras told Paul about the bad teachers who had come and were confusing the believers. What would happen to the little church in Colossae if these bad teachers kept on causing trouble? What could be done?

How helpful Paul was! He shared his wisdom with Epaphras, and he prayed for the church in Colossae. (SB25) But best of all, Paul sat down and wrote a letter for Epaphras to take back to the believers in Colossae.

How happy Epaphras was to have Paul's letter! He hoped it would be just the encouragement the believers needed. Letter in hand, he headed home to Colossae.

(SB26) When he got home, Epaphras gathered the believers together and read them Paul's words:

Dear Believers in Colossae,

I've not met you, but I've been praying for you! Epaphras told me how you heard the Word of truth about Jesus and believed. I'm praying that you will go on growing in the truths you've learned. This is how God will help you know Him better and give you strength to keep on living for God, like He wants you to," Paul wrote.

"You don't need to go back to the old laws you used to keep. You don't need wear magical stones to be safe! Jesus kept the God's laws perfectly for you. He broke the power of sin and death when He died on the cross," Paul told them.

"So, keep on remembering what you've learned about Jesus from God's Word. Let it soak deep down in your hearts and minds. Help each other remember these things by teaching them to each other and singing them in your worship songs. Keep on trusting in Jesus. And in everything you do, do it all to honor Jesus, giving thanks to God.

May God's power be at work in you, Paul.

Some of the believers in Colossae kept struggling with what the bad teachers said, but, many heard Paul's words and were helped. They would depend on what God's Word told them about Jesus and everything else to give them what they needed to keep on loving God and living for Him. And God would be faithful to help them! He always is!

Cracking the Case: (story wrap-up for Listening Assignments)

It's time to see how we did with our Listening Assignment.

Detective Dan's Lesson 1 Listening Assignment:

1. Where were teachers teaching bad things to believers? What were they confused about? To go back to the old, bad ways of living, like keeping special rules and using magic stones.

2. What book could help them know the truth? God's Word, the Bible.

For You and Me:

Like the believers in Colossae, we can turn to God's Word, the Bible, to know what is true. There, we can read about Jesus. There, we can learn how to turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our Savior. And there, God can continue to teach us more of His truth and make us strong to live for Him.

Detective Dan's Lesson 2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is Deuteronomy 8:3:**

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

1. What was bad about the teachers in Colossae?

They were teaching the believers to go back to the old, bad ways of living, like keeping special rules and using magic stones.

2. What book could the believers read to help them know how to know how to live for God? God's Word, the Bible.

For You and Me:

Like the believers in Colossae, we can turn to God's Word, the Bible, to know what is true. There, we can read about Jesus. There, we can learn how to turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our Savior. And there, God can continue to teach us more of His truth and make us strong to live for Him.

Detective Dan's Lesson 3 Listening Assignment:

Our six clues were: a rabbit, a bad teacher, God's Word, a magic stone, a "bad" food, and a tree.

1. Which four belong in our story?

The bad teacher, God's Word, a magic stone, and the "bad" food belong. The rabbit and the tree do not.

2. Who asked God to help the believers in Colossae?

What did he ask God to do? Epaphras did. To help them remember God's Word and use it to work in their hearts.

For You and Me

Like the believers in Colossae, we need to remember God's Word and ask God to use it to work in our hearts. We can ask Him to help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus. And, we can ask Him to help us to love Him and live for Him. Ask Him to help you! He loves to answer this prayer!

The Gospel (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)**Our Bible Truth is:****Why Do God's People Keep Believing in Him?****It Is God's Sustaining Grace...****The Word of God Feeds God's People!**

What was the good news that Paul preached from God's Word that changed Epaphras ... and can change us, too? That Jesus is the Savior God sent to save us from our sins. When we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior, God will forgive our sins and make us His people forever. God can help us do this, too. Ask Him! He loves to help us do this!

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

- A** God, we praise You for being the Giver of Your Word, the Bible.
- C** We confess that many times we don't want to read Your Word or live by it. We need a Savior!
- T** Thank You for promising to use Your Word, the Bible, to strengthen Your people and help them to know You and love You better. Thank You for using it to help them keep on believing in You and living for You.
- S** God, use Your Word to help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us to know You and love You better as we read it. Send Your Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, helping us to understand Your Word and live it out.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Go to Lesson Plan, p.9 for the script to the rest of the lesson.