

Peter in Prison Again

Acts 12:1-19



New Testament 4
Part 2: Lessons from the Apostle Peter

SUNDAY MORNING

New Testament 4 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Acts 12:1-19

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Peter and the Angel"](#)
- ["Why Did Peter Stay Outside the Gate?"](#)
- ["An Angel Helped Peter"](#)
- ["Whisper a Prayer"](#)
- ["I Can Talk to God"](#)
- ["Bow Your Head"](#)
- ["I Like to Pray to God"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [N.T. Disciples & Peter](#) Bible fact cards (provided under "N.T. 4 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- "Summary of the Bible" from ["Kids Prep"](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- [Map of New Testament World](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- "Pray Without Ceasing" flipchart you make using pictures from magazines, calendars, old curriculum packets, etc., to illustrate times and places we can all pray. (For example: in the morning, at a meal, at night, at school, on the bus, sitting in a swing or in a baseball dugout, in a car or airplane, etc.) [You could also put these pictures up on the bulletin board as you talk about them, rather than using them as a flipchart.] ([Flipchart instructions](#) provided in activity sheets)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God will always answer my prayers, but it will not always be in the way that I expect. I have to trust Him to answer them, because He knows what is best for me.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

What are some things you pray for? (Let the children discuss this.) Talk about some of their prayers that have been answered (a sick person got better, etc.). God always hears our prayers when we are trying to faithfully serve Him, and today we will learn about how the Church prayed for Peter when he was in prison.

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

What are some things you pray for? Have you always gotten a “yes” answer to your prayers? (Discuss for a few minutes.) God always hears our prayers when we are trying to faithfully serve Him, but does not always give us the answer we want. Today we will learn about how the first century Church prayed for Peter when he was in prison and God helped him escape.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. As time passed and the number of Christians in the Church grew, so did **persecution**. Christians moved to many different places throughout the world, looking for safer places to live, teaching the Gospel wherever they went. Peter had been to Joppa, Caesarea, Lydda, and other places, teaching and preaching about Jesus. But when he returned to Jerusalem, where the other apostles were, he was in greater danger.



Persecution: mistreating others physically, calling them names, or making fun of them, especially because of their religion or devotion to God.

HISTORICAL NOTE: A governor for each province or territory of Palestine was appointed by the Romans. The governor (“king”—Acts 12:1) of Judea was Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great (who was responsible for the slaughter of the baby boys at the time of Jesus’ birth), and the nephew of Herod Antipas (who killed John the Baptizer). Herod Agrippa I was appointed by the Roman emperor Caligula and given more power and “legal latitude” than the governors who preceded him. He was very cruel and unscrupulous, like Caligula, but had the support of many Jews, especially the Pharisees. He took advantage of any opportunity to gain more favor with the Jews.

2. Herod wanted to please the Jews, and he knew that they did not like the followers of Jesus (Christians). The Jews hoped that all Jesus’ followers would stop believing in Him and stop following His teachings after His death. But the number of Christians continued to grow. Herod decided that one way of gaining support among the Jews would be to persecute and kill Christians. He sent soldiers to arrest the apostle James (brother of John), who was a leader among the apostles. He ordered that James be killed with the sword (i.e., probably beheaded—

just like his uncle had ordered the beheading of John the Baptizer). James was the first of the apostles to die and the only one whose death is recorded in the New Testament.

3. When Herod realized that the Jews were very pleased that he had killed James, he arrested Peter, too, during the Feast of Passover (i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread). That was the same time of year that Jesus had been arrested and crucified. Herod held Peter, intending to kill him for the people a week later; it would have been unacceptable to execute him during the Feast. Herod wanted to make sure Peter did not escape as he had before (Acts 5). So he ordered that Peter be chained between two guards, and that pairs of guards be posted at each door leading out of the prison.



NOTES:

- “Easter” in Acts 12:4 in the KJV is incorrectly translated; it should read “Passover.”
- This was the third time that Peter had been arrested. See also Acts 4:3 and 5:18.

4. That same night, God sent an angel to Peter. A bright light appeared in Peter’s cell, and the angel hit him on the side to wake him up. He told Peter to get up quickly. Immediately the chains fell off of Peter’s hands. The angel told him to put on his sandals and wrap his cloak around him. Peter did as he was told, then followed the angel out of the prison without any of the soldiers or prisoners knowing he was leaving. Peter thought he was having a dream—until he saw the prison’s outer gates open by themselves! The angel walked with him down the street and then suddenly disappeared, leaving Peter alone. He realized that he was really free, freed again by the miraculous power of God.



NOTE: Notice that outside the prison, the angel did not do anything for Peter that Peter could not do for himself. “We can expect God to do the impossible if we obey and do the possible.”—Warren Wiersbe.

5. Peter’s first thought was to go to the home of John Mark’s mother, Mary. Mary’s house was apparently a common gathering place for the Church at that time, since Peter thought of going there first. Many Christians in Jerusalem had gathered at Mary’s house to pray earnestly for Peter. (KJV says they prayed “without ceasing”—Acts 12:5.) They were probably also there to encourage one another. Those days would have been pretty scary since two of their leaders had been arrested, and one had already been killed.
6. When Peter knocked at the door of the house, a servant girl named Rhoda recognized his voice as he called out. She couldn’t believe that Peter was really there. She ran back into the house to tell the others that Peter was outside the gate, but they couldn’t believe it either. Peter continued to knock on the gate until finally one of the Christians opened it and let him in. They were all so amazed that God had answered their prayers like that! Why were they so surprised, since that’s what they had been praying for? Probably because they prayed so earnestly for James, and he was killed anyway. But they had continued to pray for Peter, because they still believed that prayer was important and powerful. Sometimes we forget that when we pray, God actually hears us and **will answer** His faithful followers.
7. The Christians were so excited that Peter had to motion to them to be quiet (apparently because he was still out on the street where he could be caught again if someone saw him). Peter explained to the Christians how he had been freed from prison by God, told them to go tell James, and then he “went to another place.” Why he went to another place is unclear, but possibly, he didn’t want the enemies of Christianity who put him in prison to come to the homes of other Christians looking for him and cause them trouble.



NOTE: It is uncertain which James the Christians were to go tell. James the brother of John has just been killed. It could have been James the Son of Alpheus (the apostle), but it was likely James the brother of Jesus (who wrote the book of James), who became an important part of the early Church (cf. Acts 15:13; 21:18-20; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 2:9). [Note that some believe these two James' are one and the same.]

8. The Christians who prayed for Peter believed in the power of prayer. They believed that God would answer their prayers, even though His answers might not have been what they expected or wanted (as in the case of James' death).
9. How does God answer our prayers? Sometimes He does not give us what we ask for (He says, "No") because He is our Heavenly Father and knows what we need. He knows when something we ask for wouldn't be good for us. Sometimes we have to wait for His answers a lot longer than we expect (He says, "Be patient"). And sometimes God gives us what we ask for (He says, "Yes"). It is not important for us to know exactly how prayer works or why God does things His way. What is important is that we continue to pray and believe that our prayers will make a difference, and that we pray for God's will (James 4:15). If we pray for our own will, sometimes God will give us what we want so we will learn to trust Him, even if it's not what would be best for us—like when He gave the Israelites a king.



NOTES: Peter is the central figure in the book of Acts throughout the first twelve chapters. After this miraculous escape from prison, Peter's actions and effect on the early Church "take a back seat" to the ministry of Paul.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

Ages 2-5:

- "[Peter in Prison Again Coloring Sheet](#)" (provided in activity sheets)
- Write verses on sheets of construction paper which include the word "pray" or "prayer." Laminate the papers. Go over the verses, word by word, with the children. Then show them word cards with "pray" and "prayer." Then ask the children to find those words in the verses and circle the words with a dry erase marker.
- Enlarge all or part of Acts 12:1-19 by 200% on a copy machine. Underline the key words from the story (e.g., Peter, praying, prison, angel, and Lord). Give each child a copy of the page, or have one large copy which you have laminated. Show the children cards with key words from the story. Ask the children to find one word at a time and circle it with a different color. (If using individual copies, they can use crayons or colored pencils. If using a single, laminated copy, they can use dry erase markers.)
- Act out the story.
- Pick someone from the congregation who is sick and talk about praying for that person. Pray for the person with the children, and then let them sign a card to that person that lets him or her know that the class is praying for them.

1st-2nd Graders:

- Enlarge all or part of Acts 12:1-19 by 200% on a copy machine. Underline the key words from the story (e.g., Peter, praying, prison, angel, and Lord). Give each child a copy of the page, or have one large copy which you have laminated. Show the children cards with key words from the story. Ask the children to find one word at a time and circle it with a different color. (If using individual copies, they can use crayons or colored pencils. If using a single, laminated copy, they can use dry erase markers.)
- [“Who Should We Pray For Worksheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Who Prayed This? Worksheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Let kids decorate foam door hangers with the following Scriptures:
I can pray when:
 - I need something (Matthew 6:11);
 - I’ve sinned (Psalm 51:1-3);
 - I’m sad (Psalm 86:4);
 - I’m thankful (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)
- Act out the story.
- Pick someone from the congregation who is sick and talk about praying for that person. Pray for the person with the children, and then let them sign a card to that person that lets him or her know that the class is praying for them.

3rd–4th Graders:

- [“Who Should We Pray For Worksheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Who Prayed This? Worksheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
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- Act out the story.
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- Have the children read the following:
 - *How Peter Served Jesus*, by Liz Shockey, Bible Big Book (Group Publishers)
 - *I Can Pray!* by Jennifer Holder and Diane Stortz, Happy Day Books (Standard Publishing)

FINGERPLAYS:

“PETER AND THE ANGEL”

One, two, what did the angel do?
Three, four, woke Peter on the floor. [count on fingers]
Five, six, then his sandals he fixed.
Seven, eight, open swung the gate.
Nine, ten, Peter was free again! [hold out open palms]

“WHY DID PETER STAY OUTSIDE THE GATE?”

Now here is the gate outside Mary’s house. [draw a big square]
Peter knocked and knocked and knocked! [knock on table 3 times]
Why did he stay outside the gate?
‘Cause Rhoda ran inside [“run” with fingers on table]
And forgot to unlock the gate! [motion like turning a key in a lock]

SONGS:

“AN ANGEL HELPED PETER” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook
(Tune: chorus of “Sunlight, Sunlight”)

Angel, angel, to the jailhouse went;
Angel, angel, God the Father sent.
Peter was so happy, out of jail he came;
He could now go preach, yes, preach in Jesus’ name.

“WHISPER A PRAYER” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

Whisper a prayer in the morning,
Whisper a prayer at noon.
Whisper a prayer in the evening,
To keep your heart in tune.

God hears our prayers in the morning,
God hears our prayers at noon.
God hears our prayers in the evening,
So keep your heart in tune.

“I CAN TALK TO GOD” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*
(Tune: “The Farmer in the Dell”)

I can talk to God (point to self, to mouth, then upward), (REPEAT)
God listens when I pray to Him,
I can talk to God.

“BOW YOUR HEAD” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

(Tune: “Taps”)

Bow your head, close your eyes,
Send a prayer, send a prayer to the skies.
God is list’ning above.
God is love.

“I LIKE TO PRAY TO GOD” ([Click to Hear](#))

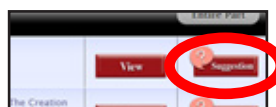
Author: Lora Laycook

(Tune: “The Farmer in the Dell”)

I like to pray to God, I like to pray to God,
With all the other boys and girls, I like to pray to God.
He’ll hear me when I pray, He’ll hear me when I pray;
With all the other boys and girls, He’ll hear me when I pray.
I’ll pray in Jesus’ name, I’ll pray in Jesus’ name.
With all the other boys and girls, I’ll pray in Jesus’ name.

*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

*** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.



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WEDNESDAY EVENING

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PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God will always answer my prayers, but it will not always be in the way that I expect. I have to trust Him to answer them, because He knows what is best for me.

INTRODUCTION:

- [N.T. 4 Bible Fact Flashcards](#) (provided under “N.T. 4 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Briefly review Sunday morning’s lesson (see [N.T. 4 Review Questions](#) for example questions)
2. God wants us to pray “without ceasing” (regularly and frequently—1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to believe in the power of prayer (James 1:5-6), like the early Christians who prayed for Peter. He wants us to remember that we can pray (talk to Him):
 - Anytime: “pray at all times...” (Ephesians 6:18, NASB). God is never too busy to listen to me because He loves me.
 - Any place: Paul and Silas prayed in prison; Jonah prayed from inside the great fish; Moses prayed on a mountain; Jesus prayed in a garden; etc. There isn’t anywhere I can go that God won’t hear me (Psalm 139:7-8).
 - About anything: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). There isn’t anything that I can’t talk to God about.
3. Have the children give examples of things that they have prayed about and how God answered their prayers.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Review Sunday’s lesson.

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