

# Leader Beheaded;

## Liberated from Prison

### Acts 12



New Testament 7  
Part 2: ABCs of Acts 7-12

## SUNDAY MORNING

New Testament 7 [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 REFERENCES:

Acts 12

### MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: “[C]onstant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5b).

OLDER CHILDREN: “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5).

Also help the children memorize the ABCs of Acts.

### 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 Out?”](#)
- [“Whisper a Prayer”](#)
- [“I Can Talk to God”](#)
- [“I Will Pray”](#)
- [“God is Listening”](#)
- [“An Angel Helped Peter”](#)

### 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.]
- [ABCs of Acts 1-12](#) Bible fact cards (provided under “N.T. 7 Bible Facts”)
- “Acts Chapter Summary” from [“Kids Prep 2”](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- “Summary of the Bible” from [“Kids Prep”](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/ Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens’ felt pieces



- **John the Baptist/Peter A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)**
- **Map of Palestine (provided in activity sheets)**

## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I can talk to God in prayer any time, anywhere, and about anything.

## LESSON STARTS HERE

### INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Last week we talked about encouraging other people. What does it mean to encourage someone? What two men in last week’s lesson encouraged new Christians?

People who pray are also encouragers. What are some things you pray for? Today we will talk about an apostle who was put in prison, but many people were praying for him. Let’s see what happened!

### INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review last week’s lesson.

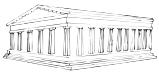
Last week we talked about the importance of encouraging other people. People who pray are also encouragers. In our lesson today, we will talk about how powerful prayer is.

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review the ABCs of Acts covered thus far.
2. “L” is for Leader Beheaded and Liberated from Prison.
3. As the Church continued to grow, Christians were increasingly persecuted (mistreated) because of their faith. So they continued to move to many places throughout the world, looking for safety. They also taught the Gospel wherever they went. Peter had been to Joppa, Caesarea, Lydda, and other places, teaching and preaching about Jesus. But when Peter returned to Jerusalem where the other apostles were, he was also in danger.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** The Romans appointed a governor over each of the provinces (territories) of Palestine. The governor (called “king” in Acts 12:1) of Judea at this time was Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great who slaughtered the babies in Bethlehem (Luke 2), and the nephew of Herod Antipas who killed John the Baptist. Herod Agrippa I was appointed by the Roman emperor Caligula and given more power and greater legal latitude than his predecessors.

4. Governor (“King”) Herod was very cruel and corrupt. But he was popular with many of the Jewish people, especially the group called Pharisees. Because the Jews disliked Christians, Herod decided that one way to keep the Jews on his side would be to kill as many Christians as he could find. He arrested the apostle James (brother of John) and had him killed (beheaded, like his uncle Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist). James was the first apostle to die.



When Herod realized that killing James “pleased the Jews,” he arrested Peter (Peter’s third arrest), promising that Peter also would be killed.



**NOTE:** James is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the New Testament.

5. Peter was arrested during the Feast of Passover (or the Feast of Unleavened Bread). Remember that this was the same time of year that Jesus had been arrested and crucified several years before. Agrippa promised the Jews that Peter would be killed a week later, after the Feast was over. He wanted to make sure Peter could not escape like he did another time he was in prison (Acts 5). So he ordered that Peter be chained between two guards. Then he posted pairs of guards at each door leading out of the prison.



**NOTE:** The King James Version incorrectly translates “Passover” as “Easter” in Acts 12:4..

6. That same night, God sent an angel to Peter. A bright light appeared in Peter’s cell, and the angel struck Peter on the side to wake him up. He told Peter to get up quickly, and immediately the chains fell off his hands. He told Peter to put on his sandals and wrap his cloak around him. Peter obeyed and then followed the angel out of the prison, without any of the soldiers knowing he was leaving. Peter thought he was having a dream until he walked out of the prison’s outer gates. The gates opened by themselves, and Peter and the angel continued down the city street. Suddenly the angel disappeared, leaving Peter alone. Peter then realized that he really had been freed from prison by an angel of God. (It is interesting to note that once outside the prison, the angel did not do anything for Peter that the apostle could not do for himself.)



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the article “[Did Peter’s Chains Fall Off His Hands or His Wrists?](#)” on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to the allegation that Luke made a mistake in his report of this event.

7. Peter’s first thought was to go to the home of John Mark’s mother, whose name was Mary. Apparently, Mary’s house was a common gathering place for the church, since Peter went there first. John Mark’s family was undoubtedly wealthy, because there was a servant to answer the door, the house had an outer gate, and the large gathering was in another part of the house.
8. Many Christians from Jerusalem had gathered there, praying fervently for Peter. (ASV/ESV says they prayed “earnestly”—Acts 12:5.) Maybe they had gathered to pray just like this before James was beheaded, just a few days earlier. Even though God allowed James to die, they still believed in the power of prayer—and in God’s will to do what was right for the entire Church. They believed that prayer was important and powerful, and they needed to be together during those scary times for support and encouragement.
9. When Peter arrived at Mary’s house, he knocked on the door, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to the door. When she heard Peter’s voice, she was so excited that she forgot to open the door. She ran back into the house to tell the others that Peter was outside the gate, but they thought she was mistaken, thinking she was “out of her mind” (Acts 12:15, ESV) or that Peter had an angel that she

had seen (vs. 15). Peter continued to knock until they opened the door and saw for themselves that he was there. (It is interesting that those who were praying so hard were so incredulous!)



**NOTE:** After this incident, Peter is no longer the central figure of the book of Acts. Beginning with Acts 12:25, the remainder of this historical record of the early Church focuses on the work of Paul.

The “James” mentioned in Acts 12:17 is the brother of Jesus, not the apostle who was beheaded. See also Acts 15:13; 21:18-20; 1 Corinthians 15:7; and Galatians 2:9.



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the article “[Answering the Allegations](#)” on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to the allegation that Luke made a mistake regarding the account of the death of James in Acts 12.

10. Peter explained to his brothers and sisters in Christ how he was released from prison and then he “went to another place.” It is likely that the Roman authorities also knew the Christians often gathered at Mary’s house and would come there first to look for Peter. No doubt Peter didn’t want to endanger the lives of anyone else by his presence there.
11. The early Christians believed prayer was important and powerful. They believed God would answer their prayers. God wants us to pray, just as the early Christians did. Prayer is talking to God, and He wants to hear from us all the time. How does God answer our prayers? Because He is our Heavenly Father and loves us very much, He sometimes tells us “no,” because we don’t need what we pray for or because it wouldn’t be good for us. Sometimes we have to wait for answers. And sometimes God says “yes,” giving us what we pray for—but at a time that He knows is best for us.

**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:**

- “[Praying for Peter Coloring Sheet](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- Continue working on ABCs of Acts booklet. (“[ABCs of Acts Booklet](#)” page 12 provided in activity sheets)
- Print “Pray Without Ceasing” in large letters on cardstock or construction paper (one for each child). Laminate the sheets, and cut them into five or six puzzle pieces. Put the pieces in Zip-loc® bags. Let children put the puzzles together in class and take them home. (Provide a baggie for children to carry their puzzle in.)
- Print “I Can Pray Anywhere!” on half sheets of cardstock. Provide pictures (from magazines or old curricula) of children eating, playing with friends, sleeping, doing chores, riding bikes, etc.). Let the children glue the pictures onto their pieces of card stock.
- “Leap Frog” game: Write review questions from this and previous lessons on lily pad cutouts. Turn them upside down, and tape them on the floor or a blue plastic tablecloth. Let the children take turns tossing a beanbag frog (use a regular beanbag if you can’t find a frog) onto a lily pad. Read the questions to them when their frog lands on a lily pad.

### 1st-2nd Graders:

- Continue working on ABCs of Acts booklet. (“[ABCs of Acts Booklet](#)” page 12 provided in activity sheets)
- “[Math Activity](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- “Bible Bingo”: Create review questions over this and previous lessons in this unit—questions with one or two word answers. Make a Bingo card for each of your students. Write the answers randomly on each card; laminate all the cards. Give students small pieces of paper to cover the spaces on their cards. To play, read the review questions; the students should cover the answers on their cards. The first to get four or five in a row wins (depending on your card design). ([Bingo sheets and rules](#) and [N.T. 7 Review Questions](#) provided on curriculum Web site)

### 3rd-4th Graders:

- Continue working on ABCs of Acts booklet. (“[ABCs of Acts Booklet](#)” page 12 provided in activity sheets)
- “[Math Activity](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- “Bible Bingo”: Create review questions over this and previous lessons in this unit—questions with one or two word answers. Make a Bingo card for each of your students. Write the answers randomly on each card; laminate all the cards. Give students small pieces of paper to cover the spaces on their cards. To play, read the review questions; the students should cover the answers on their cards. The first to get four or five in a row wins (depending on your card design). ([Bingo sheets and rules](#) and [N.T. 7 Review Questions](#) provided on curriculum Web site)
- Have the children read the following:
  - Acts 12 (as well as 9-11 if they did not do so this quarter or in NT6) [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Acts 9-12 quiz from AP’s [Advanced Bible Reader](#) site for the children to take.
  - *Peter Set Free*, by Gloria Truitt, Arch books (Concordia Publishing House)
  - *Discovery* magazine articles: “To God Be the Glory,” [March, 2004](#)

## FINGERPLAYS:

### “PETER AND THE ANGEL”

One, two, what did the angel do?  
Three, four, woke Peter on the floor; (count off fingers)  
Five, six, then his sandals did fix.  
Seven, eight, angel opened up the gate,  
Nine, ten, Peter was free again! (hold out open palms)

### “WHY DID PETER STAY OUT?”

Now here is the gate outside Mary’s house (draw a big square in the air)  
Peter knocked and knocked! (knock three times)  
Why did he stay out?  
Rhoda ran inside (run with two fingers)  
In her hurry, she left the gate locked! (motion like locking the door)

## SONGS:

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

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune: See Internet)

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.

### **“I WILL PRAY”** ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook

(Tune: chorus of “Sunlight, Sunlight”)

I will, I will, I will stop and pray.  
I will, I will, pray to Him each day.  
For He always loves me, and He loves you, too;  
If you will obey Him, He will answer you.

### **“GOD IS LISTENING”** ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook

(Tune: “Are You Sleeping?”)

God is listening, God is listening, (put your hand to your ear)  
While we pray, while we pray, (put hands together as if to pray)  
Bow your head so lightly, (bow your head)  
Close your eyes so tightly, (close your eyes)  
Let us pray, let us pray.

**“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.

\*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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### PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I can talk to God in prayer any time, anywhere, and about anything.

### INTRODUCTION:

Review [N.T. 7 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under “N.T. 7 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Briefly review Sunday’s lesson (See [N.T. 7 Review Questions](#) for example questions), as well as other ABCs covered to this point.

Talk with the kids about the importance of prayer, reading passages on prayer (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:16; Luke 18; James 5:13-18; Acts 8:22; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 1:9).

Make a prayer list with their suggestions.

### 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):

- See Sunday morning’s lesson.

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