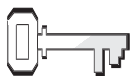


The Great Escape



References

Acts 12:1-19; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 143-154



Memory Verse

"Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5, NIV).



Objectives

The children will:
Know that people in a community of faith pray for one another.
Feel confident that they can trust God to answer their prayers for others.
Respond by praying faithfully for one another.



The Message

God hears and answers our prayers according to what is best for us.

Monthly Theme

We are active in God's family.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

King Herod had Peter put in prison and had him chained between two soldiers, intending to place him on trial for his beliefs. The believers gathered together and prayed for Peter. In the night an angel came and led Peter safely out of the prison, walking past the guards posted to prevent his escape. He went to the place where the believers were praying, knocked, and identified himself to the servant girl, Rhoda. She was so excited that she ran back to tell the others without opening the door. The others did not believe her, but finally went to see for themselves and let Peter in. He told them what had happened and then left for another place.

This is a lesson about community.

The believers formed a community of faith that prayed earnestly for Peter's safety. We, too, can be active in prayer for people in our community of faith who have great needs. We can believe that God will hear and respond to our prayers.

Teacher Enrichment

Porter. "A wealthy house looked uninviting from the exterior because entry was through a single, locked cedar door that was often guarded by a porter. . . . The porter sat in a porch behind the gate and waited until he recognized the voice of the person wanting to come in. Rhoda took the place of the porter and waited until she recognized the voice of Peter. (Acts 12:13-14)" (*The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, pp. 39, 40).

Peter in prison. "The apostle was not intimidated by the situation. Since his reinstatement after his denial of Christ, he had unflinchingly braved danger, and had shown a noble courage and boldness in preaching a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. As he lay in his cell, he called to mind the words that Christ had spoken to him: 'Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.' Peter believed that the time had come for him to yield up his life for Christ's sake" (*Review and Herald*, April 27, 1911).

Prison life. To be imprisoned during Bible times often meant being confined to a dark, damp, filthy, rat-infested dungeon. To make matters worse, a person could be thrown into prison simply for being suspected of a crime, as prisoners were considered

“guilty until proven innocent.” A person could be held in prison for many years before being tried, and often, prisoners would die of malnutrition or disease.

Room Decorations

See Lesson 1.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Activities	up to 10	<i>A. Name Tag Challenge</i> <i>B. Waiting to Grow</i> <i>C. Three-legged Relay</i>	construction paper, scissors, crayons, markers, stickers, safety pins pot of soil, seed, seedling (optional), water; or packet of fast-growing seeds, seedlings (optional), plastic container for each child, paper towel, water strips of cloth
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Story Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy; The SDA Hymnal</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering container from Lesson 1 strips of paper ½ x 6 inches (1 x 15 cm), pencils/markers, glue or stapler
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible, Bible-times costumes, chain from prayer time Bibles Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Prayer Partners</i>	paper plate, crayon or pencil, yarn, buttons or craft eyes
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>How Can You Help?</i>	Bibles

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share an experience from last week's lesson study. Have them begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- construction paper
- scissors
- crayons or markers
- stickers to make name tags
- safety pins

A. Name Tag Challenge

Instruct the children to make a name tag that includes something that represents a challenge that they are facing. It may be something that has happened recently or an anticipated event. For example, "I'm going to a new school, and I don't know anyone," or "My mom is going to have a new baby, and I'm feeling a little jealous." Encourage them to make their name tags as creative and unique as possible.

Debriefing

Ask: **Who would like to share their name tag and challenge with the rest of the group?** Allow each child to introduce themselves and tell the "story" behind their name tag. Affirm each child by saying, **Thank you for sharing your challenge. We will remember to pray for that during our prayer time.**

What are two things that everyone can do when they have a problem?

Accept answers. **We can pray and take all our problems to God. We can also ask our friends to pray for us. When we have problems, we are not alone. God gave us other believers in the church to help and support us. In our story today Peter had a serious problem. His friends prayed for him, and God answered in a wonderful way. Today's message tells us:**



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- pot with soil
- large seed such as a bean
- seedling (optional)
- water

Alternative:

- packet of fast-growing seeds
- seedlings (optional)
- plastic container for each child
- paper towel
- water

B. Waiting to Grow

Ask a volunteer to help you plant the seed. Have the child place the seed about an inch into the soil and cover it. Ask another person to water it.

Alternative

Give each child a plastic container, some paper tissues, and seeds. Help the children to wet the paper and "plant" the seeds on top. (Do not add too much water at this stage as the children will take the containers home.)

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **What will happen to our seeds? Do you think that by tomorrow the seed will look like this?** (Hold up seedling or picture from seed packet.) **Why not?** (It takes time for a seed to

grow.) **Because we can't see what is happening inside the seed, does that mean that nothing is happening? Prayer is something like that.**

Say: **We may not see an answer immediately, but that does not mean that God is not working. When we pray, God hears our prayers, and He will answer them in His own time. Peter's friends prayed for him when he had a serious problem, but when the answer came, it was such a miracle they could hardly believe it. And that reminds me of today's message:**



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

Say that with me.

C. Three-legged Relay

Divide the children into groups of three. Tie their ankles together so that the person in the middle is tied to the person on either side. Have each trio perform a simple task, such as walk to the end of the room and pick up a book, or walk to the other side of the room and sit on the floor. Call them back to their seats without untying them.

You Need:
• strips of cloth

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **How does it feel to be attached to two other people? How would you feel if you were attached like this all the time? Would it be easier if you were attached at the wrists? In our story today Peter was chained to two soldiers. His friends prayed earnestly for him. But when the answer came, it was such a miracle they could hardly believe it. Let's remember that ...**



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

Say that with me.

Note: Prayer and Praise appears on page 47.

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- Bible
- Bible-times costumes
- chain from prayer time

Experiencing the Story

Characters: Peter, angel, two soldiers, Rhoda, group praying

Setting the Scene

Dress the children in Bible-times costumes. Make sure that the key characters have costumes.

Position Peter and the soldiers on one side of the room, people praying on the other side, and Rhoda a little way from the people praying near something Peter can knock on. Wrap Peter in the chain from prayer time (see page 47).

Encourage the children to listen carefully and act out the story as you read it. They should repeat their lines after you say them.

Read or tell the story.

[Peter and soldiers lying on the ground.]

Peter had been arrested by Herod and he was in prison. At first he could not sleep. He lay on the cold, hard ground in the dark. His hands were chained to two guards. His only comfort was knowing that the other believers were praying for him.

Fourteen other soldiers stood outside the cell guarding him. It was humanly impossible to escape. Eventually he fell into a deep sleep.

Peter felt something—or someone—touch him. *[Angel gently touches Peter.]* He woke up to a bright light. It was an angel!

“Quickly, get up,” the angel said. Peter thought he was dreaming until the chains fell off his wrists. *[Breaks out of chains.]*

“Put on your clothes and sandals,” said the angel. Peter did. *[Mime putting on clothes and sandals.]*

“Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel said. Peter obeyed, but he felt as if he were still dreaming. The angel led Peter past all 14 guards and out of the prison. When they reached the prison gate, it opened by itself. As they walked down the street, the angel disappeared. *[Angel leaves Peter and joins the praying friends group.]*

Peter finally felt as if he was awake.

“I know the Lord sent His angel to rescue me from Herod!” he said to himself.

Peter hurried to John Mark’s mother’s house. He knew the believers had gathered there to pray. He knocked on the outer door. *[Knock at pretend door.]* Rhoda, the servant girl, answered.

“Who is it?” she asked through the closed door. *[Put head close to “door.”]*

“Rhoda, Rhoda,” Peter whispered. “It’s Peter.” *[Peter leans forward and whispers.]*

“It’s Peter!” Rhoda shouted joyfully. “He’s at the door!” She was so excited that she ran back to the others without opening the door. *[Rhoda runs over to the group praying.]* Peter stood there, surprised that she hadn’t let him in. He could hear a voice inside saying, “Rhoda, you’re out of your mind.” *[Point to different people in the praying group to repeat the comments.]*

“No, it’s true!” Rhoda cried. Peter knocked again. *[Peter knocks.]*

“Peter’s in jail,” said another voice.

“But I heard him,” said Rhoda. Peter knocked again. *[Peter knocks.]*

“He’s got four squads of soldiers guarding him,” someone else probably said.

“I know his voice,” insisted Rhoda. Peter knocked harder. *[Peter knocks.]*

“It is Peter!” Rhoda said in a tearful voice. Peter didn’t want to wake up the whole neighborhood, but he knocked loudly once more. *[Peter knocks.]*

Eventually they went to the gate and yanked it open. They almost shouted when they saw Peter. He motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. *[Finger to lips.]*

Their voices dropped to a whisper as they pulled him inside the house. *[Peter goes inside.]*

Everyone began talking at once, saying, "Praise God, Peter, you're safe"; "We've been praying for you all night"; "How did you get out?"

Peter told how the Lord's angel had helped him escape. Then he said, "I've got to go somewhere that is safer. Tell James and the others what happened. Thank you for your prayers. Keep praying for me."

Debriefing

Ask: **Why was Peter in prison?** (See Acts 12:2, 3.) **Why was it impossible for him to escape? Who woke Peter up? What were the believers doing? Who answered the door when Peter knocked the first time? How did the believers react?**

How would you have felt if you had been Peter? What would you have done if you had been with the church members when they heard that Peter was in prison? When others pray for us, it helps to strengthen our faith. Let's remember our message:



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

Memory Verse

Repeat the memory verse a number of times until the chil-

You Need:
• Bibles

dren know it. Do the following actions as you say it:

Peter was kept in prison, Fold arms across body as if hugging yourself.

but the church Fingertips together in an upside down V in the shape of a roof.

was earnestly praying Fold hands in prayer.

to God for him. Point upward.

Acts 12:5

Bible Study

Say: **God sent an angel to help Peter. Let's discover other times when God sent His angels to help someone.**

Form small groups to read the following texts and report back. Assist nonreaders as needed.

Daniel 6:19-22 (Daniel)

2 Kings 6:8-17 (Elisha)

Genesis 19:1, 2, 12-16 (Lot and his family)

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **Do you believe that God can send an angel to protect you or help you? Why?**

Do you think that people were praying for Daniel? Why did God send angels to Lot? (Because Abraham prayed for him.)

Say: **God has given us a special promise in Psalm 34:7. Let's read it together.** Read the verse aloud. **Let's remember today's message:**



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

You Need:

• Bibles

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- paper plates
- crayon or pencil
- yarn
- buttons or craft eyes

Prayer Partners

Give each child a sheet of paper, crayon or pencil, yarn, buttons or craft eyes. Ask the children to make their face by drawing a large circle with crayon or pencil on a sheet of paper. They should use yarn for hair and buttons or craft eyes for eyes to create facial features. When they have finished, have them write their names and exchange pictures with someone.

Debriefing

Say: **In our lesson today we talked about the power of prayer and the importance of praying for others. Remember to pray for this person. Let's remember today's message:**



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

4

Sharing the Lesson

You Need:

- Bibles

How Can You Help?

Read or tell the following.

Joy and her family are new church members. Joy's dad lost his job because he would no longer work on Sabbath. Joy's family doesn't have enough money for food and other things they need. When Joy comes to Sabbath School, she sometimes looks sad. If Joy and her family were members of our church, how could we help? (Discuss ideas.)

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask:

What does the Bible say in Romans 16:1, 2 about helping our

church brothers and sisters? (Read text.) **What are some other ways that we can be more helpful?**

Sometimes God sends angels to help, but sometimes He sends people. Our hands need to be praying and helping hands. Think of someone you can help by praying for them. Let's look for ways to help others. Remember ...



GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS BEST FOR US.

Closing

Gather the children in a circle. Close with prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to pray for one another.

Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review last week's memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "A Little Talk With Jesus" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 98)
- "For You I Am Praying" (*The SDA Hymnal*, no. 284)
- "Whisper a Prayer" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 96)
- "Teach Me, Lord" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 110)
- "This Is My Prayer" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 106)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize the value of praying for one another.



Offering

Remind the children that giving an offering does not always mean giving money. It is simply sharing the best that we have with our Friend Jesus so that someone else may learn of Him.

You Need:

- offering container from Lesson 1



Prayer

Give the children strips of paper. Ask them to write or draw a representation of something that is a challenge for them. Form loops. Link the loops to form a single large chain. Say: **Sometimes when we have problems, it feels as if we are tied up in chains and cannot do anything. Maybe we cannot, but Jesus can. He listens when we pray to Him. Jesus has promised that He will hear and answer our prayers.** Stand in a circle and let everyone hold part of the chain. Pray that each person will be strengthened in their struggles. Keep the chain for Experiencing the Story.

You Need:

- strips of paper
½ x 6 inches
(1 x 15 cm)
- pencils/markers
- glue or stapler

The Great Escape

References

Acts 12:1-19; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 143-154

Memory Verse

"Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5, NIV).

The Message

God hears and answers our prayers according to what is best for us.

Have you ever tried to open a door and found it was locked? Peter was in prison behind locked doors. Would he ever leave that cold, dark place?

At first Peter could not sleep. He lay on the cold, hard ground in the dark. His hands were chained to two guards. He hurt all over. His only comfort was knowing that the other believers were praying for him.

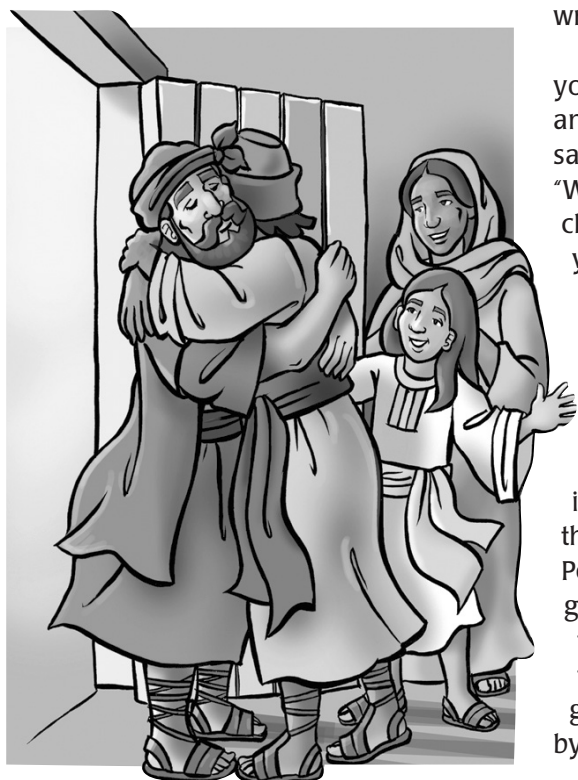
Fourteen other soldiers stood outside the cell guarding him. To escape was humanly impossible. All the excitement of being arrested made him very tired. Soon he fell into a deep sleep.

Peter felt something—or someone—touch him. He woke up to a bright light. An angel reached out to him.

"Quickly, get up," the angel said. Peter thought he was dreaming, until the chains fell off his wrists.

"Put on your clothes and sandals," said the angel. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

Peter obeyed. He felt as if he were still dreaming. Quietly, the angel led Peter past all 14 guards. When they reached the prison gate, it opened by itself.



As they walked down the street, the angel disappeared. Peter knew then that this was not a dream; he was awake. "I know the Lord sent His angel to rescue me from Herod!" he said to himself.

Peter walked to John Mark's mother's house. He knew the believers had gathered there to pray. Peter knocked softly on the outer door. Rhoda, a servant girl, answered.

"Who is it?" she asked through the closed door.

"Rhoda, Rhoda," Peter whispered. "It's Peter."

"Peter!" she shouted joyfully. "He's at the door!" Then without opening the door she ran back to tell the others. Peter stood there, surprised that she hadn't let him in. He put his ear on the door. He could hear a voice inside saying, "Rhoda, you're out of your mind."

"No, it's true," Rhoda cried. Peter knocked again.

"Peter's in jail," said another voice.

"But I heard him," said Rhoda. Peter knocked again.

"He's got four squads of soldiers guarding him," someone else may have said.

"I know his voice," insisted Rhoda. Peter knocked harder.

"It is Peter!" Rhoda said in a tearful voice.

Peter didn't want to wake up the whole neighborhood, but he knocked loudly once more.

Everyone rushed toward the door. They yanked it open, and almost shouted when they saw Peter. He motioned for them to be quiet.

Their voices dropped to a whisper as they pulled him inside the house.

Everyone began talking at once, saying, "Praise God, Peter, you're safe"; "We've been praying for you all night."

Then Peter told them how the Lord's angel had helped him escape. When he finished, he said, "I've got to go some-

where that is safer. Tell James and the others what happened. Thank you for your prayers. I know that's why the angel came to set me free."

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- With your family, go for a Sabbath walk while tied loosely to another person. What does it feel like? Think about what it must have been like for Peter.
- Pray for all those who are in prison today for believing in Jesus.

Sunday

- Read and discuss Acts 12:1-19 during family worship.
- Pray for your church family.
- Cut 16 thin strips of paper. Write one word of the memory verse on each strip. Glue both ends of the strips together, linking them to form a paper chain. Review your memory verse every day.
- How many chains can you find around your house? Which is the heaviest? What kind of chain do you think was used on Peter?

Monday

- Make a family prayer list during family worship.
- Ask each person to share a time when God answered their prayers.
- Sing "Whisper a Prayer" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 96).
- Lie down on the floor for five minutes. Think what it must have been like for Peter lying on the floor in prison.
- Pray for the people on your prayer list.

Tuesday

- Look in an encyclopedia and see what you can find out about Roman prisons.

- Create a prison model to share at worship.
- During family worship see how many other Bible prisoners you can think of.
- Thank God for your freedom.

Wednesday

- Find the ABCs to prayer by looking up Matthew 7:7; Matthew 21:22; and John 11:41. Fill them in below: A _ _ , B _ _ _ _ _ , C I a i m
- Make a poster to put up in your room to remind you of the ABCs of prayer.
- Share the ABCs of prayer with your family at worship today, and use the ABCs as you pray together.

Thursday

- Make a greeting card for an older church member. On the card write Mark 11:24 and "I'm praying for you." With your parents permission, mail the card, take it to their home, or give it to the person at church. Continue to remember this person in your prayers.
- Mark out a "prison cell" 6' x 3'. Stay in the space for 10 minutes. While there, thank God for the people who pray for you every day.

Friday

- For worship, act out the story of Peter with your family.
- Look at your family prayer list and see how God has answered your prayers for each one.
- Say your memory verse for the family. Sing a prayer song.
- Continue to pray for those on your family prayer list.