

UNIT 32 | SESSION 4

PETER WAS RESCUED FROM PRISON

ACTS 12

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Corinthians 12:12

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

God answered the people's prayers for Peter. God had a plan for Peter and the church, and He rescued Peter from his enemies. Peter knew he would face death because he believed in Jesus, but he kept going so he could share the good news of the gospel.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



PREPARE

PREPARE YOUR HEART TO TEACH; PLAN THE SESSION



WELCOME

GREET KIDS and OPEN THE SESSION



LEARN

TEACH KIDS THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL



LOVE

LEAD KIDS TO LOVE THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL



LIVE

LEAD KIDS TO LIVE OUT THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LEADER Bible Study

Acts 12 tells the story of God's divine and miraculous rescue of His apostle Peter. While King Herod sought to make an example of Peter, it was God alone who was able to showcase His power and might amidst the persecution of the church. This passage highlights the power of prayer amidst hardship and how God's purposes for His church will prevail despite the futile attempts of the enemy.

What can we learn about God's plans despite persecution and suffering? What can we learn about living on mission even during our most difficult circumstances?

God's plans for the good of His church, even during persecution, include the fervent prayers of the saints. The intercession of these faithful believers revealed that their only hope was in the Lord, and it was their prayers that were used by God to rescue Peter from prison. As God answered their prayers, He showcased His power to thwart the evil plans of those who wish to harm His church. Peter's incredible escape from prison reflects the same hope that we who have trusted in Jesus receive as the chains of sin fall off, and we are set free from condemnation. God's purpose for His church was by no means coming to an end in that prison cell; rather the word of God spread and multiplied. (Acts 12:24)

The consequence of declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ was costly for Peter and for James, who was executed by Herod. Though Herod's sentence for James was death, to die would mean this disciple's gain. Peter knew the consequences of sharing the gospel, yet he also believed that Jesus was worth giving his life to, trusting that the salvation of others was worth the risk as well. Even still, God granted Peter salvation from this prison cell so that he could continue living on mission for Him.

May we be aware that God has done more than send an angel to rescue us from earthly hardship. He sent His very Son to rescue us from the eternal consequence of our sins. Christ's sacrifice on our behalf offers the hope we need to endure difficulties and the boldness we need to share His divine hope with others.

TERMS TO KNOW

Prayer: talking to God and listening to Him. Prayer makes a difference in what happens (James 4:2), and faith is a condition for answered petitions (Mark 11:24).



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



Activity Page
- ☐ "What Doesn't Belong?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 2)
- ☐ construction paper cut into long, narrow strips, 5 per kid



Introduce the Session
- ☐ countdown video

Big Picture Question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline
- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story
- ☐ "Peter Was Rescued from Prison" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ paper chains (optional)
- ☐ flashlight (optional)

Questions from Kids
- ☐ "Unit 32, Session 4" questions from kids video

Missions Moment
- ☐ "McCaman Family Photos" printable
- ☐ world map

Key Passage Activity
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Many Parts (1 Corinthians 12:12)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



Review & Bible Skills
- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



Activity Choice (Option 1)
- ☐ inflated beach ball

Reflection and Prayer
- ☐ Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

> **SAY** *"Who do you go to when you need help or have a question? Why do you go to that person? How do they help you or answer your question?"*

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "What Doesn't Belong?" on the activity page.

> **SAY** *"Many objects did not belong in this picture. Today, we will learn how Peter was put into prison even though he didn't belong there. Let's get ready to learn more."*

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: LEAD ME



Invite kids to line up behind you. Tell kids that they are to follow you around the room, copying the movements you make. Lead kids by hopping, skipping, walking backwards, and so on. After 30 seconds or so, choose a kid to be the leader. Direct him to lead the kids using different movements. Continue switching leaders as time allows.

For an added challenge, consider turning off the lights at various times. Tell kids that when the lights are off, they must freeze. Then turn the lights back on and resume the activity.

> **SAY** *"Today, we will learn how an angel appeared to Peter while he was in prison. The angel told Peter to get up and follow him. Let's get ready to hear where the angel led Peter."*

☐ OPTION 2: PAPER CHAINS

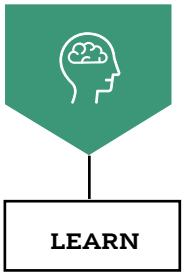
Before the session, cut construction paper into long, narrow strips. Make five strips per kid. Write *God rescued Peter from prison* on a dry erase board for kids to refer to.

Provide each kid with a set of paper strips, tape or stapler, and a marker. Lead kids to write a word from the dry erase board on each strip of paper. Then direct kids to take the first strip with the word *God* and tape or staple it to form a loop. Next, lead kids to insert a second strip with the word *rescued* into the loop and secure it with tape or a stapler. Continue this process in order of the message from the dry erase board. Consider preparing a completed chain for the kids to refer to as well.

> **SAY** *"Your paper chains remind me of our Bible story. Today, we will learn how Peter had chains placed on him and was put in prison. Do you think chains could stop God from rescuing Peter?* **[Allow responses.]** *No, God is greater than any chain. Let's get ready to hear how God rescued Peter from prison."*

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

> **SAY** "Hi, kids! My name is **[your name]**. I am glad to see you today! As we get ready to hear our Bible story, raise up your Bible if you brought it with you. **[Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.]**
>
> Today, we will learn that Peter was in trouble. He was put in prison and it looked like he would be killed for his faith in Jesus. Yet, God chose to rescue Peter and answer the prayers of His church. We'll see how God had a plan for Peter and His church."

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

> **SAY** "**What is the church?** *[Allow responses.]* The answer we've learned is, **The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.** Let's say that together: **The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.**
>
> One way the church worships and serves God is through prayer. We spend time sharing prayer requests, giving God praises, and praying for one another. God hears our prayers and wants us to talk with Him. Going to God in prayer is a way to worship Him. It's also a way to serve others as we pray for their needs. Today, we will learn how the church had gathered together to pray for Peter. They asked God to help Peter as he was in prison. Let's get ready to learn how God answered the church's prayers."

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

> **SAY** "When Stephen was killed because of his faith in Jesus, many believers in Jerusalem scattered to other towns. While many Jewish leaders wanted to stop the church, God used their wicked plans to grow His church and spread the church further into the world. Peter and other disciples shared the good news of Jesus everywhere they went, both to Jews and Gentiles. Many people believed and the church grew.
>
> But many leaders continued to harm Christians and stop the gospel from being shared. Today, we will learn that Peter was arrested because of his faith in Jesus. Let's get ready to hear how the church responded to this difficult circumstance."



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 12. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Peter Was Rescued from Prison." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

PETER WAS RESCUED FROM PRISON

King Herod Agrippa was persecuting believers in the church. He killed James, one of Jesus' apostles. When the king saw how happy this made the Jews, **he arrested Peter too**. The king put Peter into prison and assigned groups of soldiers to keep guard. **While Peter was in prison, other believers in the church prayed and asked God to help him.**

The king planned for Peter to be killed. **The night before his trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was in chains**, and other soldiers stood guard at the gate of the prison. **All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord appeared** and a bright light shone in Peter's prison cell.

The angel struck Peter on the side and woke him up. **"Quick, get up!" the angel said. The chains fell off of Peter's wrists. The angel told Peter to get dressed**, so Peter put on his sandals and his cloak. **Then he followed the angel.** Peter wasn't sure what was happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

The angel led Peter out of the prison, past the guards, through the gate, and onto the streets. Then the angel left. When Peter looked around, he realized the Lord had rescued him from prison and from certain death!

Peter hurried to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the believers had gathered to pray. When Peter knocked at the door, a servant named Rhoda answered. She heard Peter's voice and she was so happy she rushed back inside, leaving Peter standing outside. "Peter is here! He is at the door!" she announced.

But the others didn't believe her. "You're crazy!" they said. Peter kept knocking, and **when they opened the door, they could hardly believe it. Peter** motioned to them to be quiet, and he **told them how the Lord had rescued him from prison.**

"Tell James, Jesus' half-brother, and the other brothers about this," Peter said. Then he left. When the sun came up, the soldiers at the prison couldn't figure out what happened to Peter, and the king punished the soldiers because Peter had escaped.

Christ Connection: God answered the people's prayers for Peter. God had a plan for Peter and the church, and He rescued Peter from his enemies. Peter knew he would face death because he believed in Jesus, but he kept going so he could share the good news of the gospel.

STORYTELLING TIPS

Display chains: Lead kids to hold up the paper chains they made from the session starter activity or display paper chains you created as you tell how Peter was bound in chains.

Shine light: Begin telling the story with the lights off. Then shine a flashlight when you get to the part about the angel appearing.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

> **SAY** "*King Herod Agrippa had James killed and Peter thrown in prison. King Herod Agrippa wanted to kill Peter too. What did the church do while Peter was in prison?* **[Allow responses.]** *The church prayed! They asked God to rescue Peter from prison. God's people have hearts that want to talk with Him and come to Him for all their needs. Prayer is the way we come into God's presence. Prayer is how we talk and listen to God so that we can be comforted by Him, experience His peace, and strengthen our faith in Him.*
>
> *God heard the church's prayers and sent an angel to rescue Peter. What was Peter doing when the angel rescued him?* **[Allow responses.]** *Peter had been asleep when the angel came to rescue him. Why do you think Peter was able to sleep in prison, knowing that his good friend James had just been killed?* **[Allow responses.]** *Perhaps Peter trusted God no matter what he faced, even if it was death. Peter was willing to die for the gospel because he had faith that even if he died for Jesus, he would live forever with Him.*
>
> *God used the prayers of His people to rescue Peter from prison. God may not always answer our prayers how we want Him to or how we think He should. But God always hears our prayers and as we pray, we grow to trust God more. As the church meets together, we can pray for Christians around the world who may be suffering, like Peter, trusting that God hears our prayers.*"

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

> **SAY** "*God answered the people's prayers for Peter. God had a plan for Peter and the church, and He rescued Peter from his enemies. Peter knew he would face death because he believed in Jesus, but he kept going so he could share the good news of the gospel.*"

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 32, Session 4" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How do we know God is real?
2. How can you help others know God is real and that He sent Jesus to save us from sin?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the "McCaman Family Photos" and a world map as you tell the kids about the church planters. Point to the different locations on the map as you tell the kids where the McCamans have served.

> **SAY** "*Pastor David McCaman and his wife, Jennifer, are church planters in Boynton Beach, Florida, with Gospel City Church. The McCamans believe that God used past ministry opportunities to prepare them to be church planters in South Florida. They have led churches in Tennessee, Florida, and in Bangkok, Thailand. While in Bangkok, the McCamans learned how to creatively*



> *explain God's love to the people. Pastor David said: 'We learned to trust God to change hearts and draw those far from Him to Himself. It taught us to be faithful to the mission and trust God with the results.'* "

Tell kids that while serving in Tennessee at LifePoint Church, the McCamans desired to "Live Sent"—or be on mission sharing Jesus with others. Explain that even though starting new churches comes with many challenges, the McCamans want to share the gospel so that people will trust in Jesus and be saved from their sin. Remind kids that praying for other believers is a way the church can worship and serve God. Ask God to help Gospel City church reach many people for Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Corinthians 12:12 together.

> **SAY** " *Our body has many parts—eyes, ears, legs, hands, arms, feet, knees, and elbows! Each part is used in different, but important ways. The same is true for the church. The Bible calls the church the body of Christ. We all have different jobs, but each is needed.* "

Lead kids to stand up and follow you as you point to your eyes, ears, nose, shoulders, knees, etc. While pointing to different body parts, say the key passage aloud. Then invite a kid to point to body parts and help lead in saying the key passage aloud. Repeat as time allows.

Lead kids to sing "Many Parts (1 Corinthians 12:12)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

> **SAY** " *Thank You, God, that You hear our prayers. Thank You for loving Your church and helping us in hard times. Give us hearts that trust You no matter what we face. Amen.* "

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Remind kids that the Bible has two main divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Practice leading kids to find a book in the Old Testament such as Judges and a book in the New Testament such as Ephesians. Then guide kids to open their Bibles to Acts 12.

Consider pointing out the location of Jerusalem (H4) on the New Testament Mediterranean Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Acts 12:6-7 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"Peter was in prison because he shared the gospel. When the angel came to Peter, he was sleeping. Would you be able to sleep in prison, knowing that the king wanted to kill you?* ***[Allow responses.]*** *It would be a normal response to be afraid in such a difficult situation. But Peter was able to sleep even though he faced death because he trusted God and was willing to give his life for the gospel. For Christians, difficult times are not the end because we always have the hope of living with Jesus forever. Like Peter, we can trust that whether God chooses to rescue us or not, Jesus has saved us to enjoy heaven with Him."*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"Can you think of other people in the Bible who trusted in God and were saved from dangerous situations? Who?"*

Answers will vary. Prompt kids to think about people like Noah, Moses, Rahab, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and others who placed their trust in God. Discuss how these people believed in God's promises and character. Explain that some people like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed that even if God did not rescue them from earthly danger, they knew death was not the end.

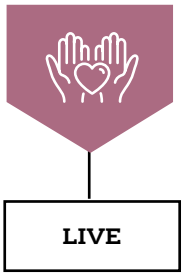
> **SAY** *"The church prayed for Peter. Why do we pray?"*

Tell kids that we pray for many reasons. Discuss how prayer is the way that we call out to God when we are in need, when we want to say we are thankful, or when we want to worship him. Share how God already knows what we pray before we pray it, but prayer helps us remember who God is and our need for him. Remind kids that God loves it when we pray to him.

> **SAY** *"The church was amazed by Peter's rescue. When have you been amazed by what God has done?"*

Answers will vary. Remind kids that nothing is too difficult for God. Help kids understand that God has a plan and purpose for all His actions. Tell kids that God was not done with how He would use Peter to help build His church.

Transition from **LOVE** *to* **LIVE** 



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE *(10 minutes)*

☐ OPTION 1: BEACH BALL PASS



Before the session, use a permanent marker to write action words on each segment of a beach ball, such as *run in place; jump; spin; say, "Pray, Give, Go;" do five jumping jacks; clap*; etc. Lead kids to stand in a circle to play a beach game. Tell kids you will toss the ball to players and the words written on the ball closest to their right thumb will be the action the kids will perform. Explain that they will continue to do the action until they catch the ball again and then change to the new action. Direct kids to throw the ball to another kid after they've read the action they're to perform. Continue playing as time allows.

> **SAY** "*Gospel City Church is located in a beach town where many water and outdoor activities are enjoyed by the people. Playing games like this provides a fun way to make friends and tell others about Jesus. Let's pray for Gospel City Church to find ways to build relationships with the people of Boynton Beach so they can hear the good news.*"

☐ OPTION 2: PRAYER PICTURES



Prompt kids to think about how the church prayed for Peter in today's Bible story. Then lead kids to think about different prayers they might want to ask God. Invite kids to draw a picture of their prayer whether it is a praise or a request. Provide kids with paper and markers. Encourage kids to remember that God hears our prayers. Then invite kids to share their prayer pictures with the group.

> **SAY** "*God loves it when we come to him in prayer. Sometimes it is hard to find the right words to pray when we are overwhelmed or worried. We do not have to have the right words for God to understand our prayers. God knows our hearts, and we can ask Him to help us through His Spirit as we pray. Remember that God always hears our prayers, and we can trust Him to answer in ways that are for our good and His glory.*"

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER *(5 minutes)*

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.