

11. Peter in Prison (Acts 12:1-17)

“As for us, we can’t stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20)



PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
Persecution
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

Who’s There?
Pray for Your Church
Loving God,
Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Offering basket | Pencils | Dry erase board and marker | Art supplies of your choosing

Gather: TV/DVD player

Explore: TV/DVD player

Respond: Tablecloth | LED candle | Cardboard or a curtain

Bless: Tablecloth | LED candle | TV/DVD player

Before You Teach

In this week’s Bible story, Peter is arrested because King Herod is harassing those who belong to the church. This occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is another name for Passover. This was the weeklong celebration of the Israelites’ liberation from slavery in Egypt. Herod places Peter under heavy security while he’s in prison. While Peter is in jail, the church prays for him. Peter escapes prison with the help of an angel sent by God. The angel tells Peter, “Quick! Get Up! . . . Get dressed. Put on your sandals” (verse 7). This is an echo of the Lord’s instructions at the first Passover (Exodus 12:11). After Peter’s escape, he immediately goes to his friend Mary’s house. Mary was a believer also and John’s mother (not the mother of Jesus). Other believers were gathered at her house praying for Peter. When Peter arrives, he knocks at the gate and Mary’s servant Rhoda answers. She is so excited to see Peter that she runs back to tell the other believers, leaving Peter outside the gate. When she tells them Peter is there, the others think she has lost her mind. However, they do go with her to see for themselves. When they see Peter standing there, they are shocked. Peter gets them to calm down so that he can tell them about how the Lord sent an angel to help him escape and instructs them to tell others. Then he leaves for another place.

This story presents opportunities to explore prayer, particularly prayer within our faith communities. The session contains some prayer activities and prompts. This session also lends itself to discussing persecution and what it means to be harassed for what you believe in. Children will most likely relate this to bullying, so be prepared to discuss healthy ways for children to deal with this issue. In terms of faith, you’ll want your children to come away with an understanding that even though being a person of faith is not always easy or popular, God will always be with them to help them through situations that may arise. In addition, this session also contains a fun game and mission activity.

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GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display either attendance chart (Class Kit—pp. 16–17 or 15 & 18) at eye level.

- Play “Changed” (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have the children mark the “Attendance Chart” by signing their first names on week #11.

SAY: Today, we are learning a story about when the disciple Peter was in prison.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 11 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of “What the Church Did” (Activity Sheets—p. 23). Let them complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the “Who Helped Peter Escape?” activity (Activity Sheets—p. 24).

SAY: Peter’s church prayed for him, and God sent help.

OR

B—Persecution (Discussion)

Before class: Spend some time thinking about what persecution means to you.

ASK: Have you ever heard the word *persecution*? What do you think it means?

- Allow the children to respond. Then affirm them if they have gotten it right, or offer explanation if they have not.

SAY: Persecution is being harassed or punished because of your beliefs. In our Bible story, Peter was arrested because he was a Christian, and King Herod was harassing those who belonged to the church.

ASK: Can you imagine what it would be like to have someone harass you because of what you believe? Have you ever felt persecuted in your life? What are some ways that you can respond or get help if you ever feel persecuted?

TIP: *This discussion may naturally lead to a discussion of bullying. Be prepared to discuss issues surrounding this topic that may come up in your discussion.*

Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring a chair or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a helpful way for children to move easily from one activity to the next.*

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EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- Who helps you when you need help?
 - When have you been surprised or excited to see someone?
 - What did you do that showed your surprise or excitement?
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Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—Acts 12:1-17).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 11.

SAY: In our Bible story, Peter comes back to the community of believers after he is imprisoned by King Herod.

ASK: How do you feel when someone comes back?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out “Peter in Prison” (Bible Story Sheets—Session 11).
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Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the “Unit 3 Bible Verse” poster (Class Kit—pp. 10 & 23).

- Tell the children the Bible verse: “As for us, we can’t stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).
 - Invite the children to say the verse with you.
 - Then, have the children say the verse to another child.
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Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

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RESPOND

Who’s There? (Game)

Before class: Create a screen big enough to hide a child using cardboard, or hang a curtain in your room. Gather a markerboard and dry erase marker.

SAY: Let’s play a game to remind us of Peter knocking at the gate of Mary’s house after his escape.

- Have one child go behind the screen or curtain. Have the other children form a line on the other side. Have the first child in line knock or vocally make a “knock knock” sound if using a curtain. The child on the other side will ask who is there. The child from the line will respond with, “the Lord sent an angel to rescue me” (in a disguised voice if they choose). Allow three guesses per voice.
- If the guessing child guesses incorrectly, he or she must join the other children in line, and the child whose name he failed to guess takes his or her place. (Once a new person takes the guessing position, all of the other children have to scramble themselves in line because the new person will know what order they were standing in.) If a child guesses who is knocking correctly, he or she gets one point and then attempts to guess the next person and continues until he or she guesses incorrectly. Keep score on the markerboard. Continue to play as your time permits.

OR

Pray For Your Church Community (Spiritual Practice)

Before class: Gather an LED candle and find a place where children can sit comfortably in a circle.

SAY: The church prayed for Peter while he was in prison. Let’s pray for our church community.

ASK: Are there any prayer concerns?

- Light the candle. Allow the children to speak any particular prayer concerns or names of people they would like. Let them know that it is also OK to pray for someone without naming him or her. Lead the children in a prayer for the needs that were named. Afterward, allow a few moments for the children to pray silently on their own.

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Before class: Display the “Mission” poster (Class Kit—p. 2). Photocopy “Mission” letter (Leader Guide—p. 72) for each child. Gather a box and a variety of art supplies of your choosing.

- Allow the children to take time to read the letter. Then have them work together to decorate a donation box.

SAY: We’ll be learning about and supporting the Wesley Centre over the next several weeks. We will place donations for the center in this box.

Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth and an LED candle.

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BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display “Unit 3 Bible Verse Signs” poster (Class Kit—p. 31) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Let’s learn to sign our Bible verse.

- Gather the children around the Bible Verse Signs poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
 - Teach the children to sign the verse.
 - Have the children practice signing the verse to another child.
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Praising

Before class: Gather a TV/DVD player and the Adventure DVD.

SAY: Today, Peter experienced God’s love in the form of an angel sent to rescue him from prison.

SAY: Let’s learn a song about being changed by God’s love.

- Play “Changed” on the Adventure DVD.
 - Let the children sing along if they would like.
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Blessing

SAY: In our Bible story, the church prays for Peter, and God sends an angel to help Peter. Let’s take a moment to pray for God’s help for each member of our classroom community.

- Gather around the worship center, and light the LED candle.
- Have the children say the following line after you: “God we pray for (insert child’s name).”

PRAY: Dear God, we know that you can help (insert child’s name) in any way that (he or she needs). Please be with (him or her) throughout the week ahead. Amen.

- Repeat for each child present.
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At Home with God

SAY: What was one thing that you learned today about Peter in prison? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets—Session 11, and the Unit 3 Song Sheet home with each child.

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Mission Letter

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SUPPORT John Wesley Community Centre

In South Africa, the John Wesley Community Centre serves vulnerable children who have been affected by HIV/AIDS. As of 2018, South Africa had the largest HIV epidemic in the world. The John Wesley Community Centre supports children who have lost their parents to HIV/AIDS, as well as children who have the virus. Here are some services that children can find at the Centre:

- An after-school program that provides homework help and fun activities
- A spelling team
- A chess club
- Marimba and recorder classes
- Gymnastics classes
- A computer center and library
- A preschool for kids ages 1-6
- HIV/AIDS awareness training for adults and children
- Community support groups
- Counseling

Through the John Wesley Community Centre, children and others are given emotional and educational support. The John Wesley Community Centre strives to create an environment which promotes change through active and real participation.

This organization serves the local community. Many women come to the John Wesley Community Centre to engage in self-directed projects making items they can sell. There are also teams who visit homes of persons who have physical disabilities and cannot leave their houses. Pastors and social workers take time caring for and supporting their emotional needs.

This month we have the opportunity to work together to support the work of the John Wesley Community Centre. We can do this by collecting donations, making cards and writing letters, praying, and learning more about the needs of this community. **You can donate through the General Board of Global Ministries Advance #3021238 by visiting <https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-428-john-wesley-community-center.aspx>.**

