This lesson is about God delivering Peter from prison. The believers were constantly praying for this seemingly impossible situation. Students will learn from this story that nothing is too hard for God. They can trust Him even when life situations seem bad.

The original learning context for this material was older elementary Sunday School. It can also be adapted for Children’s Church and with modifications can be simplified for younger students.

**Bible Story:** Peter’s Miraculous Escape From Prison

**Scripture:** Acts 12:1-24

**Target Age Group:** Age 9 – 11 (U.S. 3rd – 5th Grade)

**Learning Context:** Sunday School

**Target Time Frame:** 60 minutes

**Printer Friendly Bible Lesson:** [PRINT this lesson plan]

**You Can Help:** Please share your feedback and suggestions to improve this children’s Bible lesson. [Click here to respond]

**Supply List:** Bibles, paper chain for memory verse, visuals of the story (flannel graphs or pictures), Robe, paper chains or toy hand cuffs, etc. for students to re-enact story.

**Learning Goal:** Students will learn that God can be trusted in difficult situations because nothing is too difficult for God to handle.

**Learning Indicator:** As students identify seemingly impossible situations in their life they will be encouraged to pray that God will work out those difficulties. Students will demonstrate their comprehension of the Bible passage by answering review questions and re-enacting story/ordering pictures.

**Learning Activity #1:** Choose students to play the characters from the Scripture passage. Allow them to re-enact the Bible lesson. Another idea would be to use pictures of the story and allow the students to put the pictures in the proper order as they occur in the Bible.

**Learning Activity #2:** Have a sword drill using Scriptures that are about God’s power and ability to do anything. (Jeremiah 32:17, Exodus 14:31, Joshua 4:24, 1 Chronicles 29:12, 2 Chronicles 25:8, Job 5:15, Psalm 18:17, Isaiah 40:10, etc.)

**Test:** Review Questions

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 19:26: Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

**Memory Verse Activity:** Have slips of paper with the words of the verse on one side. Ask the students to think of difficult situations that seem like they are never going to change. As they share different circumstances have them write it on the back of one of the slips of the Memory Verse. After having all the impossible circumstances mentioned and written down create a paper chain putting the verse in the correct order. Recite the verse a few times. Have the students pick up a section of the paper chain. As they recite the verse this time when they get to the phrase ‘with God all things are possible’ have them break the chain. After this activity have the students move to the area
where the Bible lesson is taught.

**Bible Lesson: The Church prays and God miraculously delivers Peter from prison**

This is a guide to teach the Bible Lesson. Each class has unique needs and the students are in different places with their Biblical understanding. For example in our current class of 4th graders we have a student with a deep understanding of Biblical concepts. A few weeks ago a child raised her hand and said “It’s sad that the people that God gave His promises to were the ones who crucified Jesus.” This statement was amazing because the lesson was about Cornelius’ and Peter’s vision and explanation for why the Jews didn’t associate with Gentiles was being discussed. The challenge of teaching is not assuming the students understand all the concepts you are teaching and teaching so those who do have understanding can continue to grow and not grow bored. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit we can teach with confidence knowing God knows where each student is with their Biblical understanding.

(Give Bibles to students who do not have one. )

As we have been studying the Book of Acts we have seen God’s power in many ways. What are some ways you have seen God’s power in the Book of Acts? (Allow students to respond) When we see God’s power we see that impossibilities turn into possibilities.

Let’s turn to Acts 12 to find out how God will show us His power.

God was at work and the Good news was being spread into many different places. More and more people were being saved because now even the Gentiles were believing in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit. Whenever God is working His enemy Satan isn’t happy. He doesn’t want people to hear the Good News and be saved from their sins. Satan uses whatever tool he can to try to stop God’s work.

Let’s read Acts 12:1-4. Last week we heard how Peter explained God’s plan to save the Gentiles to the Jewish believers. When they heard Peter’s explanation they understood and were in agreement with him.

There were some Jewish people who heard of this news about the Gentiles being accepted into God’s family and they didn’t like it. Does anyone want to guess who these people might be? The Pharisees and Sadducees/or Jewish religious leaders didn’t like this news at all. It went against their laws. These leaders had not put their faith in God’s promised Savior and were being used by Satan to make life difficult for followers of Jesus.

It is believed that the Pharisees and Sadducees went to King Herod and complained to him about what the followers of Christ were doing. King Herod was a Jew but didn’t believe in Jesus. He decided to make trouble for the apostles in Jerusalem. He arrested James the brother of John and had him killed with a sword. This made the unbelieving Jews very happy. This made Satan happy because he was using the unbelieving Jews to try and stop the spread of the Good News.

Sin darkens a person’s heart causing them to be used as an instrument for God’s enemy. Ephesians 4:17-24 (NKJV) Herod had a sinful heart. How do we know that? When Herod saw how happy the death of James made the Jews he decided to have Peter arrested too. Having someone put to death who didn’t break any laws should make a person sad not happy. Herod obviously wasn’t interested in pleasing God because he seemed to find pleasure in pleasing the unbelieving Jews.

At the time of Peter’s arrest the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was a seven day feast that prepared them for Passover. For the followers of Jesus it meant that the time of celebrating Jesus’ resurrection was near.

Our lesson is about God doing the impossible. Jesus, God’s Son was nailed to a cross for the sins of the world. He was buried and three days later God raised Him from the dead. Every person who believes by faith that Jesus died
in their place has every sin forgiven and are given eternal life. It was impossible for man to be saved in his/her own strength but with God all things are possible!

When Herod arrested Peter perhaps he heard about the miraculous deliverance from prison that we learned about in Acts 5:17-25. We don’t know for sure but Herod was doing everything in his power to make sure Peter didn’t get out by having him heavily guarded with four squads of four soldiers each. Each squad guarded Peter for 3 hours and then another squad would take their place. From a human’s perspective it looked like there would be no way Peter could ever get out of prison with that many guards. But remember what is impossible to man is possible with God!

Meanwhile as Peter is locked in a prison cell, the believers are gathered together doing the most important thing they could do as they faced this impossible situation. Let’s find out what they were doing. Read Acts 12:5.

These were difficult times for these believers. James was killed by Herod. Even though they knew James was with Jesus because he believed in Him, it was still sad to lose someone they loved. Now it looked as though Peter was next in line to lose his life. The believers did the only thing they knew would help their difficult situation. They prayed.

As believers the most powerful weapons we have are prayer and the Word of God. As we memorize God’s Word and grow in our understanding of God we learn how we can better pray to Him.

The place the believers were gathered to pray was in the home of Mary. This Mary is the Aunt of Barnabas Colossians 4:10 and the mother of Mark who we will be learning about later in our study of Acts.

As believers are earnestly praying to God in Mark’s home let’s check back in with Peter’s situation. As we look into his prison cell we don’t see a man who is angry with God for being put in prison when he did nothing wrong. Sometimes when we face difficulties instead of trusting that God has good intentions for every thing we face (Romans 8:28) we get angry at Him. Peter is a good example for anyone facing a difficult situation. Let’s read and see what we find Peter doing. Read Acts 12:6.

It seems like it would be difficult to sleep being chained by two soldiers and knowing that you are facing death but that’s what we find Peter doing. Peter was able to sleep because he believed completely that God could be trusted with his life. He didn’t need to worry about what was or wasn’t going to happen. Worrying only causes a person more harm. Psalm 37:8 He had peace that he belonged to God. Because he believed in Jesus the Holy Spirit lived in his heart.

It is also possible that as the believers are constantly praying for Peter that his ability to have peace is an answer to their prayers. If you and I know of someone going through a difficult situation we can pray for God to give them His peace.

This next scene is amazing! As Peter is resting peacefully chained by two soldiers a visitor shows up in his cell. The once dark prison cell is now bursting with light. Because Peter is sleeping so soundly the angel hits him on his side to awaken him. “Quick, get up!” the angel said. The chains that once kept Peter securely bound to the soldiers fall off his wrists. The angel told Peter to get dressed and put on his sandals. Peter follows the angel but has no idea what is really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision. The angel leads Peter and they walk by two more guards. They come to the iron gate that is closed so no one can enter and no one can leave. Let’s read what this secure gate does in the first part of Acts 12:10. I would like to imagine it was like walking up to those doors at the store and when they sense a person is near they just open up automatically!

As the two walked down the street the angel left Peter. By this time Peter is outside in the cool air and most likely is fully awake and now realizes what miraculous thing has just happened. He ran to the place he knew the believers were gathered and knocked on the door to the outer gate of the house. A servant girl named Rhoda came to the door. She must have wondered who would be knocking at the door at this late hour. Maybe she said, “Who’s
there?” and as soon as she heard Peter’s voice she was so excited she ran back into the house without letting Peter in.

As the believers are gathered inside praying for Peter, Rhoda comes in and screams, “Peter is at the door!”

The believers had been praying constantly every day that Peter had been in prison. Rhoda has just told them he is outside and they say, “You’re out of your mind.” What she was saying seemed impossible! How could Peter be outside? Rhoda didn’t let that discourage her and she kept saying Peter was outside.

In those days the people believed that each person had a guardian angel that looked like the person he was guarding. This is not in the Bible but it's a belief that some people had. They decided that Rhoda must have seen Peter’s guardian angel.

It's not recorded how long it takes Rhoda to convince the believers that Peter is outside. Meanwhile he continues to knock.

As the believers continue to think Rhoda is crazy, someone must of heard the knocking. They go to the door and open it and as Peter stands before them they are astonished!

Peter puts his finger to his mouth so they will be quiet. He explains to them exactly what happened and how the Lord rescued him out of prison. He told them to share this miracle with the other leaders in the church. Peter knew he could not stay because it wouldn’t be long before the news got out that he was missing. He left the believers and went to a different place.

The next morning the soldiers looked everywhere in the prison for Peter. Could they find him? Let’s read Acts 12:18-19. Herod was so angry that Peter had disappeared that he had the soldiers put to death.

Herod was being used by Satan to stop God’s Word from spreading. God’s word tells us that the wages of sin is death but the Gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23) The last we hear about Herod is that as he gathered to speak to a group of people they all thought he was a god. Let’s read what they said in Acts 12:22.

Herod should have stopped the people from speaking those words. There is only One God and he was most definitely not Him. Because he didn’t stop the people from worshiping him God punished him and he became sick and died. The price for Herod’s sin was a painful death.

Herod thought he could stop God’s work by persecuting believers. No one can stop God’s plans. Romans 8:31 Satan will continue to try to stop God’s work but he will fail every time. Let’s read our final verse for this passage from Acts 12:24.

As believers we will face difficulties. We can be encouraged that if we are trusting God and serving Him, He never leaves us. He may rescue us from the difficulties like the angel took Peter out of prison. If God chooses not to remove us from the difficulties we can trust that He is with us every step of the way and will give us His peace and strength in our difficult situation.

Before we pray, let’s say our memory verse again. If you are facing a difficulty in your life right now as we say this verse remember that nothing is impossible for God. He can be trusted!

Close in prayer.

Review Questions:

1. Who did Herod have put to death by a sword? (James the brother of John)
2. Why did Herod arrest Peter? (Because he saw that the Jews were pleased when James was put to death)
3. What feast were the Jews celebrating? (Feast of Unleavened Bread)
4. What were the believers doing while Peter was in prison? (Urgently praying)
5. How did God change Peter’s impossible situation? (An angel rescued him from prison)
6. Why did Herod die? (He allowed people to praise him as though he were a god)
7. What continued to spread even though believers faced difficulties? (God’s Word)

(Personal Questions students don’t answer out loud)

1. Which person in the story are you most like? Are you like Peter and the believers who trust God despite difficulties or are you like Herod who allowed sin to control his life?
2. What changes will you make in your day to day life after hearing this story? Will you spend more time in prayer and Bible reading? Will you pray for others you know are having a difficult time?

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