

Use Week of:

Unit 32 • Session 1

Peter Escaped from Prison

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Acts 12

STORY POINT:

God rescued Peter from prison.

KEY PASSAGE:

Matthew 28:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.



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LEADER Bible Study

Peter had witnessed the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Gentile believers. God made it clear: the gospel is for all because Jesus is Lord of all. Peter returned to Jerusalem and told the believers there what had happened. At this time, other believers who had scattered amid persecution were preaching the gospel. By God's grace, people believed and the church grew.

Before long, King Herod Agrippa attacked the believers. He arrested Peter and killed James, the brother of John. Herod put Peter in prison and planned to kill him too.

While Peter was in prison, the other believers prayed earnestly for him. God answered their prayers. Guided by an angel late one night, Peter walked right out of the prison. He escaped to the house of Mary and told the believers gathered there what God had done. Then Peter left Jerusalem for a while because his life was in danger.

Consider emphasizing one or more of the following points as you teach this Bible story. First, prayer is powerful. God answered the people's prayers for Peter. When we pray, God hears us, and we can trust that He is good and will act according to His will. Prayer shouldn't be a last resort for people who feel powerless about their circumstances. Prayer is powerful; we can call on the Lord of the universe at any time!

Second, God is in control. God had a plan for Peter and the church. Herod couldn't stop God's plan. God rescued Peter from his enemies. Even when our own plans fall apart, God is in control.

Finally, following Jesus is risky—but worth it. Peter knew he would face death because He believed in Jesus. Many believers were killed because of their faith. But Peter didn't hide or give up. He kept going so he could share the good news of the gospel. Jesus is worth living—and dying—for.

The BIBLE Story

Peter Escaped from Prison

Acts 12

King Herod Agrippa was persecuting believers in the church. He killed James, one of Jesus' disciples. 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 execution, 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.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use lighting effects:** Dim the lights to simulate Peter's dark prison cell. At the right time, shine a bright flashlight or turn on the lights as the angel appeared.
- **Vary your voice:** Speak softly to draw kids in. Speak urgently as the angel may have done. Speak hurriedly like Rhoda and with awe like Peter.

INTRODUCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss times that someone didn't believe they were telling the truth.

SAY • It can be so frustrating when people won't believe you! In today's story, something truly amazing happened to Peter. Listen closely during our Bible Story time to find out who had a hard time believing the truth.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Prison Break" activity page. Kids will find the path through the maze and place the letters in the order they encountered them on that path.

SAY • The church helped Peter escape from prison by praying for him. If it sounds like prayer wouldn't help, just wait till you hear the story! Prayer is the most powerful tool believers have to help us work out God's plans in the world.

- "Prison Break" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: True or false

Ask for volunteers to come up to the front of the group, one by one, to make two statements. One statement needs to be true, and one needs to be false. Ask the children listening to raise a hand if they think the first statement was true, then raise a hand if they think the second statement was true.

Reveal the correct answer, and congratulate the children who identified the truth.

SAY • We can often be confused by what is true and what is false. One thing we never have to be confused about is that God's Word is always true. We can trust God's promises in the Bible.

OPTION 2: Magnet maze

Draw a simple maze or path on cardstock and make copies, one for every pair of kids. Invite the children to choose a partner. One child should hold the paper flat out front, with one hand on each end to hold it steady. The other child should place a magnet at the beginning of the maze or path. Then place the other magnet under the paper in the same place. See if the child can move the top magnet along the maze or path by guiding the magnet under the paper. Allow children to switch positions after a few minutes.

· marker
· cardstock
· magnets, 1 per kid

SAY • Just like the unseen magnet under the paper was the source of power, God is the source of power in our story. Listen carefully to hear what amazing things God did for Peter.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Decorate the room to look like the headquarters of a secret government agency. Paint large RADAR screens on foam board, hang a world map, and place pins connected by colored string on various large cities on the map. Arrange kids' spy toys such as a parabolic microphone or green flashlight goggles on a table, or hang them from a peg board. You may display the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

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

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a dark suit and sunglasses.]

LEADER • Hello agents, I'm glad you could—hang on! You aren't my crack team of secret agents. How did you kids get in here? I guess it doesn't matter now, as you are already here. I need you all to promise you won't tell anyone about our secret headquarters. This is the room from which we plan all kinds of special operations. I can't really tell you any more than that, so instead, how about I tell you about a very public

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

mission that isn't a secret at all? I'm talking about the mission of Christians.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • I know what you are thinking, *What is our mission as Christians?* And don't worry, I'll tell you. *Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.* That means that we go all over the place, and we tell people about Jesus. We invite them to trust in His death and resurrection so they can be saved by faith. Then we train them to help us keep spreading the gospel to new people in new places.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His disciples about their mission. Soon after Jesus ascended—went up to heaven—He sent the Holy Spirit to live in the disciples and help them to complete the mission. We've talked about some of the problems they faced, and learned a lot of the things the apostles wrote about to help the church live out the mission well. Every time the enemies of God tried to top the mission, God had other plans. Let's hear more.

· Bibles
· "Peter Escaped from Prison" video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 12. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Peter Escaped from Prison."

LEADER • Isn't that amazing? God sent an angel to Peter, and he just walked right out of prison past two sets of guards. The Bible says the gate to the city even opened by itself! Now that's some amazing power! Isn't God awesome? It's no wonder Peter thought it was a vision or a dream. How could it really be happening? But it was. God heard the prayers of the church, and He still had big plans for Peter's life. Peter needed a miracle to escape before the king could kill him the next morning.

Miracles aren't a problem for God. The Bible is full of His miracles—things that happened that can only be explained by God's power. God is never too early and He's never too late. **God rescued Peter from prison**, and He made sure that there was no other way to explain Peter's escape except that it was God's power. Because the Bible says that the church was gathered that night, still praying for Peter, we know they had faith in God. They trusted that God could free Peter, even if they had trouble believing it when Peter showed up at their door. I have a feeling that was a night none of them ever forgot.

Christ connection

LEADER • Up until the moment the angel came to Peter's prison cell, Peter didn't know how God would answer his prayers. He knew there was a strong chance he would die, just like James had died. But Peter was not afraid to share the gospel of Jesus. Peter knew God's plans were always for the best, even if it meant it was time for him to die. But in this case, God was not done with Peter's life. He

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

miraculously rescued Peter from his enemies so Peter could continue to share the good news of the gospel. We need to pray that we will be like Peter, not afraid to share the gospel no matter what happens to us.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 32, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about the different ways God might answer our prayer requests. Guide them to discuss times when what is best for us may be different from what we want from God.

• “Unit 32, Session 1”
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • When we read in the Bible that **God rescued Peter from prison**, we know that God can do amazing miracles. We see God do great things, when we look to Him and His power.

Missionaries learn to rely on God’s power and expect Him to do great things. Let’s learn more about a missionary in Toronto, Canada, who is seeing God do amazing work.

• “The Fasolinos”
missions video

Play the missions video. Ask kids about the different cultures they saw in Toronto. Take time to pray for the Fasolinos in Toronto and for any missionaries your church supports.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Matthew 28:19-20. Then sing the key passage song.

LEADER • This key passage is often called the Great Commission. After Jesus rose from the dead, and

• Key Passage Poster
• “I Am With
You Always
(Matthew 28:19-20)”
song

before He returned to heaven, He gave this mission to His disciples. And it's the same mission we have today! *What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Go Tell the World"
song

LEADER • As we study God's Word and learn more about Him, it's important to use that new knowledge to spread the good news of Jesus. That's our mission! Sing together "Go Tell the World."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, give us courage to live on mission. Help us to pray for boldness and trust the answers You give. Help us to love You more each day, with a love that causes us to obey Your perfect commands. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- dry erase board or chalkboard
- marker or chalk
- sticky notes
- flashlight

Before class, write the key passage on a dry erase board or chalkboard. Make sure each word is spaced so that you will be able to cover one or two words with sticky notes.

Shine a flashlight on the words of the verse as the children read it out loud together. Then cover one or two words with sticky notes. Lead the kids to say it again, covering more words with each time until the key passage is completely covered.

SAY • Our key passage reminds us that God has a plan and invites us to be a part of that plan. *What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Nothing, not even a prison cell and chains, will stop God's plan to reach the world with the message of the gospel.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help them find Acts 12. Explain that Acts is the History division of the New Testament. It is called *Acts* because it tells of the acts, or deeds, that the Holy Spirit did through the apostles.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why was Peter arrested? (*Herod was persecuting Christians; Acts 12:1-4*)
2. How did the church respond to Peter's imprisonment? (*by praying for him, Acts 12:5*)
3. How did the church respond to Peter's escape? (*with joy and amazement, Acts 12:14-16*)
4. Have you ever been mistreated because of your belief in Jesus? *Guide kids to discuss the kinds of mistreatment they may face, such as bullying, teasing, or being excluded from activities.*
5. How do you think we should respond if we are mistreated? *Help kids think through appropriate ways to respond to mistreatment. Point them back to the Bible story, reminding them that Peter didn't try to fight his way out of prison. The church did not try to break Peter out either. They prayed and trusted God.*
6. What are ways God can use our hard times to bless us and glorify Himself? *Guide kids to think about the qualities God may develop in us through trials, such as patience, endurance, and compassion for others who are suffering. Help them think about the importance of trusting God's plans even when life is scary or difficult.*

SAY • God rescued Peter from prison, but not every person will be rescued from hard times. Jesus promised that we would face persecution, and even when God doesn't rescue us from mistreatment, we can know that His plans are for His glory and our good. He is trustworthy and loves us. That means that no matter what difficult times we may face, God will always use it for good, even when we don't understand exactly how.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Tip: If any kid discloses abuse or neglect, report to the proper authorities according to the laws where you live and your ministry's policies.

· paper
· pencil

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Culture creators

SAY • J.D. and Andreina Fasolino are from Venezuela. The culture there is different from the culture in Toronto, Canada, where their family lives now. Even in Toronto, the Fasolinos speak Spanish at home. Missionaries learn to blend their cultures.

Form two groups. Challenge each group to imagine a pretend country. Encourage them to write down some things that characterize their country's culture. Prompt them with the following questions: *How do the people in your country greet each other? What is considered bad manners? How do most people get around? What is a typical house like? What are the schools like? What kinds of foods are most popular? What language do they speak?*

Ask each group to share about its new country. Then discuss how the people of one country might struggle if they visited the other country. (Example: Bowing might be a greeting in one country, but it might be considered bad manners in another country!)

SAY • Missionaries who move to a new country have to get used to new cultures. ***What is our mission as Christians? Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.***

OPTION 2: Escape the guards

Select one child to be *Peter* and at least four children to be guards to stand in front of *Peter*. The rest of the children should stand on the other side of the room to represent the church praying for *Peter*. While the guards close their eyes, *Peter* should try to quietly walk around them to escape to the church. But if a guard hears *Peter*, the guard should

**LOW
PREP**

open his or her eyes and tag the child, putting *Peter* back in prison. Allow the child to try to escape two or three times, then switch roles so other children can try.

SAY • As much as Peter wanted to get out of prison, He couldn't do it on his own or in his own strength. Only with God's help and God's power was Peter able to escape the guards and be rescued from prison. God answered the prayers of the church because God still had big plans for Peter's life.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

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

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

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

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

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.