

Paul and Silas in Prison

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: We can praise God even when things are hard, and we can tell others about Jesus.

Bible passage: Acts 16:16–40. Read it before class.

Memory verse: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." *Acts 16:25 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible, masking tape, 6 sheets of paper folded in half like doors, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.

Before class: put a line of masking tape on the floor. Write the memory verse on the 6 paper doors (see part 4). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Acts 16:25.

1. Opening game: Feet Stuck Fast (5 minutes)

Kids sit on the floor with their heels touching the tape line. Their feet are "stuck fast" and may not move. Put a crayon just out of reach in front of each child. Say: "Pick up your crayon, but don't move your feet!" Let them stretch and laugh. Then ask: *How does it feel to be stuck? Do you feel like singing?* Say: "Today we will meet two men whose feet were locked tight in a prison. And at midnight they sang!"

2. Bible story: Singing at Midnight (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Acts 16, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Paul and **Silas** were in a city called **Philippi** (Acts 16:12), telling people about Jesus. A girl there had an evil spirit in her. The men she worked for, her **masters**, made a lot of money from her (16:16). For many days she followed Paul and Silas, crying out (16:17–18). Paul was **grieved**, which means troubled and sad. He turned and said to the spirit, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out the same hour (16:18)! Say: "The name of Jesus is stronger than anything evil."

But her masters were angry, because now they could not make money from her (16:19). They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the rulers. A crowd came against them, and the rulers had Paul and Silas beaten (16:19–22). They were hurt. Then they were put in prison (16:23). The jailer, the man in charge of the prison, put them in the **inner prison**, the deepest part, and made their **feet fast in the stocks** (16:24). Say: "**Stocks** are heavy wooden boards that lock a person's feet so they can't move. Paul and Silas were stuck, just like our game!"



The story continues: What did Paul and Silas do in the dark? Did they cry or complain? **Read Acts 16:25 from your Bible:** "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." Say: "They prayed and sang to God, in the middle of the night, in prison! And the other prisoners were listening."

Suddenly there was a **great earthquake**. The whole prison shook. All the doors were opened, and every one's **bands** were loosed (16:26). Say: "**Bands** are the chains and ropes that held the prisoners. They all came loose!"

The jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open. He thought the prisoners had all run away, and he was so afraid that he was going to hurt himself (16:27). But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (16:28). Say: "That means: don't hurt yourself, we are all still here! Paul was kind to the man who had locked his feet in the stocks."

The jailer called for a light, ran in shaking, and fell down before Paul and Silas (16:29). He asked, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" (16:30). They said, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**" (16:31). **Thy house** means your family. Then they told him and everyone in his house the word of the Lord (16:32). That same hour of the night, the jailer washed Paul and Silas' **stripes**, the places where they were hurt, and he **was baptized, he and all his, straightway** (16:33). Say: "**Straightway** means right away. He believed, and he and his family were baptized that very night!" Then he gave them food and was full of joy, believing in God with all his house (16:34). In the morning the rulers let Paul and Silas go (16:35–40).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where were Paul and Silas' feet? (*Fast in the stocks, in the inner prison, Acts 16:24*)
2. What did Paul and Silas do at midnight? (*They prayed and sang praises unto God, 16:25*)
3. Who heard them? (*The prisoners, 16:25*)
4. What happened when the earthquake came? (*All the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed, 16:26*)
5. What did the jailer and his family do that same night? (*They were baptized, straightway, 16:33*)

4. Memory verse: Open the Doors (5 minutes)

Tape the 6 paper doors on the wall, open, in order: *And at midnight / Paul and Silas prayed, / and sang praises / unto God: / and the prisoners / heard them. Acts 16:25.* Explain the old words: **midnight** means the middle of the night, **sang praises** means sang songs that tell God how great He is, and **prisoners** means people locked in prison. Read the verse together. Then close one door (fold it shut) and read it again. Keep closing one door each time until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves. Then say, "A great earthquake!" and open all the doors at once.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The jailer asked the most important question: 'What must I do to be saved?' Paul and Silas told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They taught him God's Word, and he was baptized that same night (Acts 16:30–33). Believing Jesus and obeying Him go together. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16).

Remission means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: when something is hard, pray and sing a song to God, like Paul and Silas. Someone may be listening!



6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Paul and Silas word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/paul-and-silas-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/paul-and-silas-craft), or **Midnight Praise**: kids sit on the floor with their heels on the tape line, "fast in the stocks." Go around the circle: each child says one thing to thank God for. Then sing a song everyone knows, like "Jesus Loves Me," softly at first and then louder: "the prisoners heard them!" At the end, say, "A great earthquake!" Everyone shakes, then jumps up free.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that we can pray and sing to You anytime, even when things are hard. Help us praise You so others hear about You. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

About the hard parts: tell the beating (Acts 16:22–23) and the jailer's fear (16:27) simply, without details. Keep the focus on God's power and on Paul's kindness: "Do thyself no harm" (16:28). If anything a child says about hurting themselves worries you, tell their parents and your pastor.

If a child asks about the girl's spirit: say simply that it was an evil spirit, and the name of Jesus Christ is stronger. It came out the same hour (Acts 16:18). Don't add scary details.