Preschool–Grade 6

Rhoda and Peter in Prison

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God answers prayer. The church kept on praying, and God did more than they expected.
Bible passage: Acts 12:1–17. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." *Acts 12:5 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Follow Me (5–10 minutes)

Kids stand. Call out the angel's words from Acts 12:7–8, and the kids act them out as fast as they can: "Arise up quickly!" (jump up), "Gird thyself!" (pretend to tie a belt), "Bind on thy sandals!" (pretend to tie shoes), "Cast thy garment about thee!" (pretend to throw on a coat), "Follow me!" (walk in a line behind you). Mix up the order and speed up. Say: "These are real words from the Bible. Today we will find out who said them, and how God answered a church that would not stop praying."

2. Bible story: Prayer Without Ceasing (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Acts 12. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Peter in prison. Herod the king **vexed** (troubled and hurt) people in the church (Acts 12:1). He put Peter in prison and gave him to **four quaternions of soldiers**, four groups of four, to keep him (12:4). **Look up Acts 12:5.** "But prayer was made **without ceasing** of the church unto God for him." (**Without ceasing** means without stopping.)

Chains fall off. Look up 12:6. The night before Herod would have brought him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with **keepers** (guards) at the door. **Look up 12:7.** The angel of the Lord came, a light shined in the prison, he **smote** (struck) Peter on the side and said, "Arise up quickly." And the chains fell off from his hands!

The iron gate. The angel told him, "**Gird thyself** (put on your belt), and bind on thy sandals... cast thy garment about thee (put on your coat), and follow me" (12:8). Peter **wist not** (did not know) it was real; he thought he saw a **vision** (12:9). **Look up 12:10.** They passed the first and second **ward** (guard post) and came to the iron gate, "which opened to them **of his own accord**" (all by itself). Then the angel departed.

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Now I know. Look up 12:11. Peter said, "Now I know of a **surety** (for sure), that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod."

Knocking at the gate. Look up 12:12. He came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose **surname** (last name) was Mark, "where many were gathered together praying." **Look up 12:13–14.** Peter knocked at the door of the gate, and a **damsel** (young girl) named Rhoda came to **hearken** (listen). She knew Peter's voice, and "opened not the gate for **gladness** (great joy), but ran in."

They were astonished. Look up 12:15–16. They said, "**Thou art mad**" (you are out of your mind). But she **constantly affirmed** (kept saying) that it was true. Peter continued knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were **astonished** (amazed). **Look up 12:17.** Peter **beckoned** (waved) with his hand for them to **hold their peace** (be quiet), and told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Peter was chained between soldiers with guards at the door (12:6). Why do you think God let it look so impossible?
2. The church prayed "without ceasing" (12:5). What helps you keep praying when an answer doesn't come right away?
3. The people were praying for Peter, but when Rhoda said he was at the gate, they said, "Thou art mad" (12:15). Why do you think they had a hard time believing it?
4. Rhoda kept saying it was true even when no one believed her (12:15). When is it hard to keep saying what is true?
5. Peter told them "how the Lord had brought him out" (12:17). Why is it good to tell others when God answers prayer?

Recall questions

1. How many chains was Peter bound with? *(Two, Acts 12:6)*
2. How did the iron gate open? *(Of his own accord, by itself, 12:10)*
3. Whose house were the people praying in? *(Mary's, the mother of John Mark, 12:12)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **therefore** means so, **without ceasing** means without stopping, and **the church** means God's people. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God heard the church and answered their prayer. God loves you and hears you too. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? '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) Peter, the same man in today's story, preached those words. To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
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: make a prayer list of three people or needs. Pray for them every day, and write down when God answers.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Acts 12:4: How many quaternions of soldiers kept Peter? *(Four)*
2. Acts 12:5: What did the church do without ceasing? *(Prayer was made unto God for him)*
3. Acts 12:6: Who was Peter sleeping between? *(Two soldiers)*
4. Acts 12:7: What shined in the prison? *(A light)*
5. Acts 12:10: What gate opened of his own accord? *(The iron gate that leadeth unto the city)*
6. Acts 12:12: What were the many people doing at Mary's house? *(Gathered together praying)*
7. Acts 12:13: What was the damsel's name? *(Rhoda)*
8. Acts 12:16: What did Peter keep doing? *(Knocking)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You hear and answer prayer. Help us keep on praying without ceasing, and help us believe You when You answer. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: Acts 12:2 says Herod killed James the brother of John with the sword. This lesson leaves it out; if a child asks, say simply that Herod had already killed James, and that God's people kept praying for Peter. The lesson stops at verse 17, before Herod punished the keepers (12:19).

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