Preschool–Grade 6

Rhoda and Peter in Prison

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

Main point: God answers prayer. Keep on praying!
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, a door (or a table to knock on), 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Acts 12:5 and Acts 12:14.

1. Opening game: Whose Voice? (5 minutes)

One child sits with their back to the class and eyes shut. Point to another child, who knocks on the door or the table and says, "Hello, it's me!" The first child guesses who it is just from the voice. Play a few rounds with new players. Say: "You knew your friend's voice! Today we will meet a girl named Rhoda who knew someone's voice through a shut door."

2. Bible story: Peter Knocks at the Gate (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Acts 12, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Herod the king was hurting people in the church. He took **Peter** and put him in **prison** (Acts 12:1–4). He was given to sixteen soldiers, four groups of four, to keep him (12:4)! "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (12:5). Say: "**Without ceasing** means without stopping. God's people kept on praying for Peter."

One night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, **bound with two chains** (12:6). Then the **angel of the Lord** came, and a light shined in the prison! The angel struck Peter on the side to wake him and said, "Arise up quickly." And Peter's **chains fell off** from his hands (12:7)!

The angel told Peter to put on his belt, his sandals and his coat, and to follow him (12:8). Peter followed. He thought he was seeing a **vision**, a dream from God (12:9). They walked past the guards. Then they came to the big **iron gate** of the city, and it opened all by itself (12:10)!

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The story continues: Out in the street, the angel left. Peter said, "Now I know of a surety," which means for sure, "that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me" (12:11).

Peter went to the house of **Mary**, the mother of John Mark. Many people were there, praying (12:12)! Peter **knocked** at the door of the gate. A **damsel**, a young girl, named **Rhoda** came to listen (12:13). Say: "Knock, knock! Who is it?"

Read Acts 12:14 from your Bible: "And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate." Say: "**Gladness** means being very happy. Rhoda was so happy, she didn't even open the gate! She ran in to tell everyone."

They said, "**Thou art mad**," which means, "You're not thinking right!" But Rhoda kept saying it was true (12:15). And Peter kept on knocking. When they opened the door and saw him, they were **astonished**, so surprised (12:16)! Peter waved his hand for them to be quiet, and he told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison (12:17). God had answered their prayer!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who put Peter in prison? *(Herod the king, Acts 12:1–4)*
2. What did the church do while Peter was in prison? *(They prayed for him without ceasing, 12:5)*
3. What happened to Peter's chains? *(They fell off from his hands, 12:7)*
4. Who came to the gate when Peter knocked? *(A damsel named Rhoda, 12:13)*
5. Why didn't Rhoda open the gate? *(She was so glad, she ran in to tell the others, 12:14)*

4. Memory verse: Pray Without Stopping (5 minutes)

Tape the 5 strips on the wall in order: *Peter therefore was kept in prison: / but prayer was made / without ceasing / of the church unto God for him. / Acts 12:5.* Explain the old words: **therefore** means so, **without ceasing** means without stopping, and **the church** means God's people. Read it together, and fold your hands every time you say "prayer." Then take one strip down and say it again. Keep taking one strip down until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God heard the church praying for Peter, and He answered. God hears you too, and He loves you very much. But we have all 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: pick one person who needs help, and pray for them every day. Don't stop, like the church didn't stop praying for Peter.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Rhoda and Peter word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/rhoda-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/rhoda-craft), or **Keep On Knocking:** you stand just outside the classroom door and close it. Ask a question from part 3 through the door. For each right answer, knock once. After the last answer, everyone calls, "Who is it?", you open the door, and the kids say, "It's Peter! God answered our prayer!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You hear us when we pray, and that You answered the church's prayer for Peter. Help us keep on praying and never stop. 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 that out for young children and says only that Herod was hurting people in the church (12:1). It also stops at verse 17, before Herod punished the keepers (12:19).

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