

# Power of Prayer

Week 2

## **BIG IDEA**

God Hears Our Prayers for Others

## **BIBLE**

Peter in Prison (Acts 12)

### FOR LEADERS

**DID YOU KNOW...** *Use this section to get yourself ready to teach!*

- **WHO?**

- The book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke were written by the same author. While the Gospel is focused on the life and ministry of Jesus, Acts focuses on the growth of the church and spread of the good news after Jesus' ascension.

- **WHAT?**

- [Acts 12](#) is part of a longer series of stories beginning in [Acts 8](#) about the rise of persecution against the church and how God protected His people through it all. In fact, God used the persecution against the church to help spread the gospel.

- **WHERE?**

- The story takes place in Judea, where Herod Agrippa, the grandson of the Herod who tried to have Jesus killed ([Matthew 2:16](#)), reigned.

- **WHEN?**

- [Acts 12](#) places the story of Peter's imprisonment and rescue by an angel around the same time that Paul began his ministry with Barnabas in Antioch. Persecution against the church in Judea increased as the gospel began to go forth to the Gentiles.

- **CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY**

- Luke says that his Gospel is about what "Jesus began to do and to teach [emphasis added]" ([Acts 1:1, NIV](#)). Acts is about what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit in the apostles. Jesus continues to work in us by His Spirit today!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Take a few moments to read [Acts 12:1-16](#).*

- I know it sounds strange, but this is almost my favorite passage in Scripture. Why? Because you couldn't make this stuff up if you tried.
- A huddle of desperate Christians is deep in prayer for their imprisoned friend, Peter.
- Peter, who they love, and who might be executed the following day.
- Then, a knock at the door.
- It's Peter, whose miraculous release now means he needs someplace safe to shelter. But those praying can't quite believe their prayers have been answered in this way and figure it must be an angel at the door, not Peter himself. It takes a brave servant girl to insist it really is Peter until finally they crack open the door and get him inside.
- Sound familiar? Like those believers, we sometimes pray without much expectation that God will answer. We don't want to get our hopes up, don't want to risk disappointment.
- But God hears our prayers, including our prayers for others. And when our prayers align with His purposes, remarkable things happen.

- So pray your kids come to know and love Him. That the diagnosis is reversed, the crisis calmed, the relationship healed. Pray boldly and specifically for God to act in the lives of people you love.
- Do that now—pray for a Peter in your life you'd like to see set free from some sort of captivity. If you take that risk, what might happen?
- And then keep listening for a knock at the door.
- Thank you for helping kids understand the power of prayer this month!

## WELCOME

### MUSIC | Worship Playlist

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *During free time, use one of our Spotify playlists to play background music while kids play OR stream the main worship service on your classroom TV to participate in the worship happening in the Auditorium.*

### PLAY | Free Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tables will be set with games and activities for kids to play until the lesson begins.*
  - *This is a great opportunity to get to know some kids and work on building relationships.*
  - *Have kids go to the bathroom prior to class beginning*
  - *At the end of Free Time, play the Countdown Video and have kids work together to clean up toys/activities and then join you for the lesson - either on risers or on the floor.*

### MEMORY VERSE | Prizes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *During free time, kids may say their memory verse from the past week to any leader in the room. Place a dot sticker on their name tag to signify that they've said the verse. Give a memory verse prize **AT PICK UP** to any kids with dot stickers.*

### WELCOME QUESTION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As kids arrive, warmly welcome them by name. Show them the welcome question written on the white board. Invite kids to be thinking about their answer during free play time. This question will be written on the board as a conversation starter during free*

time.

- **What is a sound that makes you happy?**

## INTRO

### TALK

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play the Countdown Video to signify time to clean up. Gather kids on the floor or on the risers. It's always fun to have everyone count down the last 10 seconds together!*
- **Welcome to church today, friends! I am so glad to be here with all of you.**
  - *This is a great opportunity to let kids know what the time together will look like! Walk them through the schedule and go over the class rules.*
- **I have a question for you: What is a sound that makes you happy?** *Call on several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question.*
- **Thank you for sharing! Those are wonderful things to listen to! Today we're going to learn more about how God listens to us when we pray for others. But, first, it's time to be curious...**
  - **What do you think might be some of God's favorite sounds?** *Offer a few seconds to think about it, then instruct them to do a "turn and talk" with someone sitting next to them where they say, "Good morning!", give each other a high five and then, discuss their answer. Choose a few groups to share their answer with the large group.*
- **Today we're going to learn more about how God hears our prayers for others.**

### DECLARATION

- **Before we open the Bible together, I have an important reminder for everyone here. Let's declare this together. You can by repeat after me!**
  - **Thank You, God, that You are good!** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **You made me on purpose, for a purpose.** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **I am Your kid!** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **You know me, love me, and lead me.** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **I can talk with You through prayer!** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **Thank You for hearing my prayers for others!** *(Kids repeat.)*
  - **My life can tell of Your wonder!** *(Kids repeat.)*

## WHAT? What are we talking about today

### PRAYER

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words:
  - **God, how wonderful to be known and loved by You. Through Your Holy Spirit, You're always drawing us closer to You, always shaping our lives. We're open to what You have for us to learn and willing to do what You have for us to do. We love You! In Jesus' name, Amen.**

(OPTIONAL) BIBLE STORY VIDEO

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Watch the [Peter in Prison God's Big Story!](#)
  - *NOTE: This short video will introduce the Bible Story and give you a jumping off point for the rest of the teaching. If you split into smaller group for the re-telling of the Bible Story, watch the video together as a large group before doing so.*

BIBLE STORY | Acts 12:1-16 (Peter in Prison)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Gather the crown, 2 Roman helmets, the pipe cleaner halo, and the hat with a "P" on it.
- **Open a Bible to Acts 12. Today we're going to hear a story from the books of Acts. Acts is in the New Testament and is the first book that comes after the four Gospels, which talk about the life of Jesus.**
  - *FOR OLDER KIDS:* Ask everyone to turn to Acts 12. Encourage adult volunteers to help kids find the passage. Ask for 4-5 volunteers who want to read aloud to the group. Invite them to take turns reading [Acts 12:1-16](#) aloud.
- **The book of Acts tells the true story of how the community of Jesus' followers—called the church—first started.**
- **Today the church includes people from every nation around the world, and the good news about Jesus has gone nearly everywhere! But the church began in a small area of land in the Middle East called Judea, and the first people to believe in Jesus were Jews.**
- **I'll need your help to tell today's part of God's big story. You will be the people of the church in Judea. Every time I say, "the church," you will bow your heads, fold your hands, and say, "Dear God" as if you were praying together. Let's practice:**
- **As the church grew** (pause for kids to respond), **some of the Jewish leaders who didn't believe Jesus was God's Son became jealous. They started to hurt the church leaders** (pause for kids to respond), **called apostles, and other Jesus-followers.**
- **Some were forced to leave Judea, and others were put into prison. One believer, a man named Stephen, was even killed for his faith in Jesus. But Jesus' followers continued to pray, the church grew** (pause for kids to respond), **and the good news about Jesus spread.**
- **Eventually, so many people started believing in Jesus that the Roman government started to notice. Herod Agrippa, the king of Judea, started to punish the leaders of the church** (pause for kids to respond) **in Judea. Hang on ... we need a few actors to help us tell the story. Call five volunteers on stage and give each head gear and a motion for whenever you say their names:**
  - King Herod: wears a crown and stands with hands on hips
  - Peter: wears hat with the letter "P" and stands with arms raised to his side and eyes looking up

- Guards (2): wear helmets and stand with arms crossed
- Angel: wears a halo and extends hands to both sides.
- **King Herod** (*pause to allow volunteer to respond*) **captured the apostle Peter** (*pause*) **and put him in prison to wait for his trial.**
- **During Bible times, prisons were terrible places—maybe just a hole in the ground. They were filthy, and people were treated terribly. Sometimes, prisoners didn't even receive food and would starve to death in jail. King Herod** (*pause*) **hoped that by getting rid of Peter** (*pause*), **he could make the Jewish leaders happy and win their support for his kingship.**
- **But while Peter** (*pause*) **was in prison, the church** (*pause*) **“prayed hard to God for him”** ([Acts 1 2:5](#)). **The community of Jesus' followers did not give up hope that Peter** (*pause*) **would be set free. They gathered together and looked to God for the help they couldn't give Peter** (*pause*) **themselves. God answered the prayers of His people.**
- **Peter** (*pause*) **was being held by two chains with guards** (*pause*) **on both sides of him. The night before Peter's** (*pause*) **trial, God sent an angel** (*pause*) **to set him free from prison. The angel** (*pause*) **woke Peter** (*pause*), **saying, “Quick! Get up!”**
- **Immediately, the chains fell off Peter's** (*pause*) **wrists. He put on his clothes and sandals and followed the angel** (*pause*) **past the guards** (*pause*), **out of the prison, and down the street.**
- **If an angel** (*pause*) **appeared to you and led you out of a prison cell on the night before your trial, would you believe it was real?**
- **Peter** (*pause*) **didn't! He thought it was a vision God had sent to comfort him, something happening in his mind and not in the real world. It wasn't until the angel** (*pause*) **disappeared and Peter** (*pause*) **was left alone on the street that he realized God had really rescued him!**
- **The church** (*pause*) **couldn't believe it either. While many Jesus-followers were gathered together praying, Peter** (*pause*) **showed up at the door. A servant girl named Rhoda heard Peter's** (*pause*) **voice at the door and got so excited that she ran to the other believers without letting Peter** (*pause*) **inside! When she told them, they didn't believe her—they thought it must be Peter's guardian angel** (*pause*) **instead! But when they finally let Peter** (*pause*) **in, they realized that God had heard their prayers for Peter** (*pause*).
- **It's been nearly 2,000 years since that night, and God has not changed. When we pray for others, God hears us. Our prayers don't have to use the perfect words. And though we never know whether God will answer our prayers with a “yes,” a “no,” or a “wait,” we can always trust Him. We can come to Him with our prayers because God hears our prayers for others.**
- *Thank your volunteers for their help, and collect the headwear and any other props.*

## NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

### BIG IDEA | Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray

- **Great job following along! That was a fun way to learn God's word.**
- **We're learning that prayer is an important part of following Jesus. Prayer is how we talk with and listen to God. And today we learned that God hears our prayers for others.**
- **That's our Big Idea today!**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show the Big Idea slide on the screen or the poster on the white board while you have kids repeat after you.*
- **Let's say the Big Idea together: God Hears Our Prayers for Others.**
- **Peter was in a very scary situation. He was in prison and about to face trial because he taught others about Jesus. But his friends continued to pray for him, and God heard their prayers. If God hears our prayers, does it always mean that He will do what we want Him to?** Invite kids to share their thoughts.

- **God always listens to our prayers and hears us when we pray for others.**
- **When we pray, we talk with God, and we share our praise, concerns, and requests with Him. We trust that God is King over everything, and He always knows the best way for us and those we are praying for. We can trust that God will always do what is right.**
- **God wants us to pray for others, and He listens to our prayers.**

MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 66:19-20 (NIV)

- **Today we saw how God listened to the people who were praying for Peter, and our memory verse remind us that God listens to our prayers too. Let's read it together!**
- **This verse is from Psalm 66:19-20.**
- **Here's what it says:**
  - **"But God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!" Psalm 66:19-20**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the verse to the kids, then encourage them to stand and repeat after you with the following motions:*
  - **But God has surely listened** (*Point up*)
  - **and has heard my prayer.** (*Point to ears*)
  - **Praise be to God** (*Lift hands in praise*)
  - **who has not rejected my prayer** (*shake finger as if saying "no"*)
  - **or withheld his love from me!** (*cross hands over heart*)
  - **Psalm 66:19-20** (*clap hands together, then open like a book*)
- **Nice work, friends! This verse reminds us that God loves us and loves to hear from us. He always hears our prayers!**
- **Now, we're going to have a chance to talk with our friends in small groups about everything we learned today and spend some time praying for others.**

## SMALL GROUPS

DISCUSSION | Circle Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you haven't already, split kids into smaller groups, ideally by grade. Use the following questions to help reinforce the lesson.*
  - *NOTE: Invite kids to share any questions they might have. Some kids have an easier time listening if their hands are busy. You may choose to pass out coloring sheets and allow kids to color as you discuss. You might also consider having kids lead the discussion by asking the following questions.*
- **Who was the king who arrested Peter and put him in prison?**
- **What were prisons like in Bible times?**
- **Why do you think some people didn't want others to hear the good news about Jesus?**
- **How did God answer the people's prayers for Peter?**
- **How do you think the people felt when they realized God had answered their prayers?**
- **What are some ways God has answered your prayers for others?**
- **Peter was in a really difficult situation. But the Christians who knew Peter didn't give up hope — they kept praying, and God heard their prayers for Peter. Let's take some time to talk to God**

too!

## PRAYER

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Encourage the kids to share some prayer requests with the group. You can start the time by sharing one of your own prayer requests. Then invite a few children to pray for the prayer requests that were shared. Remind the kids that God always hears our prayers for others.*

## CLOSING

### EXTRA TIME ACTIVITY | Plus One

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play in small groups OR Gather kids together on the floor or benches to explain the game. Have kids sit in a circle.*
- **Today we're going to play a game called Plus One. I'll start. I'm going to do a simple motion—anything I want. I think I'll start with this.** *Clap your hands once. Point to the kid on your right. Now it's your turn. You will do the motion I did plus one simple motion of your own* *Invite the kid to try it. Make suggestions if necessary, such as "pat your head" or "touch your nose."*
- **Great! Now we will keep it going around the circle. Pay attention! When it's your turn, you need to do all the motions that came before you, in order, plus one of your own!** *Let the kids try it. When someone messes up the order or forgets, invite that kid to start a new pattern. Play for as long as time allows.*
- **To play this game, we had to pay attention and follow the example of others, didn't we? You all did such a great job!**
- **We can learn a lot from following the example of others. We learned today that God hears us when we pray. Peter's friends prayed for him and God heard their prayers. We can follow their example and prayer for others, too.**