

LEAD SHEET

ACTS : You Won't Believe This! - WK. 5

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THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

PERSONALIZE SCRIPTURE

If you want to know God better, memorize and apply His Word!

GETTING STARTED

Some things are hard to believe. We have been going through the book of Acts and studying some events that can be hard to comprehend; we continue that today, with a story about Paul, Silas, a slave girl, and an unlikely prison break.

Before we start, I want to take a quick vote, which of these is the hardest for you to believe:

1. That someone in prison would be singing praises to God.
2. That someone freed from prison would stay in their cell voluntarily.
3. That someone would share the Gospel with their captors.

What is crazy about the passage we will study today is that ALL THREE happen.

DIGGING IN

Read Acts 16:16-24

This is all just background, so we will cover it quickly.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do Paul and Silas get in trouble?
(For casting a Spirit out of a slave. Her owners were mad because this ate into their profits.)
2. What do the magistrates demand in verse 22?
(That Paul and Silas be stripped and beaten.)
3. What happens to these two Disciples next? *(They are thrown into the “inner cell” of the prison, and their feet are fastened in stocks.)*

The inner cell, by its very nature, was the best guarded and most isolated of places. Inside it, they also have their feet fastened. Escape was unlikely; the conditions were severe. Because the odds are stacked so highly against them, we will examine the next part of their story closely.

Read Acts 16:25-34

Discussion Questions:

1. After being beaten, and thrown in jail, and having their feet fastened in stocks, what are Paul and Silas doing?
(They are praying and singing hymns.)
2. Who is listening? *(All of the prisoners and some of the guards are listening to Paul and Silas.)*
3. What happens next? *(A big earthquake hits the prison opening every door and loosening every chain in the jail.)*
4. Do any of the prisoners escape? *(No, all the prisoners stay where they are.)*
5. Why would the jailer have attempted suicide?
(He is in charge of the prisoners. If they would have escaped, then his bosses would have held him accountable by taking his life.)

6. The jailer asks, “What must I do to be saved?” Why would he ask that of all the things he could have asked or said? *(He has probably heard of Paul and Silas; he is wondering why they do not escape; he heard them singing and praying, etc.)*

7. How does the night end? *(The jailer and his whole household believe in Christ and are baptized in the name of Jesus.)*

Paul and Silas are just minding their own business when a slave girl with an evil spirit begins to bother them. They cast out the evil spirit, which causes some commotion and the two Disciples land in prison. They sit in prison, freshly beaten and newly captive. They pray and sing, and God miraculously grants them freedom. They take this freedom as an opportunity to convert the jailer and his whole family. Not bad for a night’s work, is it?

MAKING IT REAL

Many parts of this passage are hard to comprehend, but we can learn a great deal from them as well.

Give God the Glory in Trials

General Discussion:

- What are the bad things that happen to Paul and Silas in this passage? *(They are beaten, imprisoned, etc.)*
- How do you think these two found the capacity to sing from their jail cell? *(Unshakable faith, resolve to spread the Gospel no matter what, etc.)*
- If you were in their shoes, how would you have reacted? *(Allow students to share, encourage honesty.)*
- What would *you* have prayed for if you had been held captive like Paul and Silas?
(HELP! Save me! Why me, Lord!)

- For what do you think they pray? (*Praises, maybe an opportunity to share the Gospel, praying for God to be glorified*)

When we face trials, it is easy to get discouraged. However, our mission during trials is no different than when all is well—glorify Jesus.

Read Romans 5:3-5 to reinforce this point

Use Your Freedom to Be Enslaved to Christ & His Kingdom

Even when Paul and Silas' chains fell off they knew they were still bound. However, they weren't being held captive by earthly magistrates. They were bound by the Gospel to serve Jesus and advance His Kingdom.

Read Romans 6:18

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think it means to be a “slave of righteousness”? (*You are bound to do Christ's Work.*)
2. What is the result of being a slave to sin? (*Sin harms you; sin is evil; sin results in bad consequences; Sin leads to death, etc.*)
3. How is being a slave to righteousness, a slave of Christ, different? (*Jesus wants what is good for us; serving Him unconditionally leads to good things.*)

It is an interesting contrast in this passage from Acts 16. The girl is a slave—bound by cruel masters who use her demonic gifts for profit. Paul and Silas are slaves as well—bound to Christ by grace and devoted to His Glory.

The chains snapped off Paul & Silas' legs, but they did not run; instead they took the chance to do the best thing and share the Gospel.

Share the Good News with Your Enemies

It may be hard to believe that Paul and Silas sang while in chains. It may be harder still to believe that when the doors of the prison swung open they stayed put. However, the last part of the story may be the hardest for us to comprehend.

General Discussion:

- If you were in Paul and Silas' shoes, how would you have interacted with the jailer?

(Fearfully, defensively, with disgust, etc.)

- In our world, we treat enemies harshly. Why is it hard to look at those who are against us with compassion?

(We are pretty individualistic, selfish, and insecure people.)

- In Paul and Silas' situation, why was this risky?

(They could have been locked back up; they had no way of knowing how the jailer would react.)

- Why do you think they did what they did?

(Faith, devotion, conviction, mission orientated, etc.)

- What was the result? *(Several became followers of Jesus that night.)*

When we are willing to share the Gospel with people who are risky to share it with, huge things can happen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite your students to pray aloud for one of their enemies or for one of the trials they face that they might be a slave to righteousness and utilize their circumstances to glorify Jesus.