

LESSON 1—PAUL & SILAS IN PRISON

Bible Reference: Acts 16:19-34

Key Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:18—Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

OVERVIEW

- Bible Story
- Key Verse
- Prayer Part
- Small Group Activities

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Signs that say: *In, (blank sign), Give, Thanks, Everything, for this is God’s will, for you, in Christ Jesus*
- 3 Bible Story Bags with parts from today’s Bible Story
- 1 trash bag per class
- A line of blue masking tape that you put on the floor in the area where you will be playing the optional Review Activity at the beginning of this lesson. This area needs to be large enough to involve half of your class on each side of the line.
- ½ ream of paper per class
- Signs for: The Lord’s Prayer sign
- Each small group will need about 50 slips of a variety of colored paper that are 8 ½ x 2 inches in size to make “Thankful Chains.”

OPENING REVIEW ACTIVITY (Optional):

As students enter direct them to wad up pieces of paper. Tell them to wad these up one sheet at a time.)

After they are finished, SAY: On the count of three, put all the paper wads in the trash bag and sit down. 1...2...3...Go!

SAY: Today we’re starting a new series but first we want to review our last series...

ASK: What was our last series about?

ASK: What is something you learned about sin, temptation, or living for God?

ASK: What was your favorite story from the Book of Daniel?

Take out one piece of wadded-up paper.

SAY: You took this paper and you made a mess out of it. Daniel and his friends kept from making a mess out of their lives by keeping away from sin. Sin will always make a mess out of a person’s life. To remind you of this, we’re going to play a game.

Divide your class into two equal teams. Tell each team which side of the tape-line to sit on. They need to sit along the line of tape. Then explain that you are going to dump out all the paper wads along the tape-line. Their job is to push it to the other side. The side with the least amount of paper after 45 seconds wins. However, they cannot throw the paper wad or get up from their sitting position. Tell them to begin when you pour out the paper.

Play the activity a second time.

After the second game, tell the kids that you are going to see how quickly they can pick up the paper wads, put them back in the trash bag, and find a seat.

SAY: In the game you wanted to push the paper wads as far away from you as possible. That's just like sin. God wants you to stay as far away from sin as you can—to keep sin out of your life and to always do what's right.

Repeat after me: Live for Jesus everyday!

BIBLE LESSON

(Based on Acts 16:19-34)

SAY: We are so glad that you're here today. Today we're beginning a new series called "The Choice to Rejoice."

ASK: Can bad things happen to good people? (Yes, they can. Daniel and his friends from the last series are great examples. They were godly young men, but they were taken captive far away from their homes and families.)

SAY: Sometimes you can do everything right and something "bad" still happen to you, but when you're walking with Jesus, how you look at "bad" things is different. For the next few weeks we're going to see how you can make the choice to rejoice, even when things don't go the way you'd like.

CONTROL TOOL

Anytime I say, "Make the choice!" I want you to say, "To rejoice!"

Practice a few times.

SAY: Because God is good and we can trust Him, we can give thanks and rejoice even when "bad" things happen.

SAY: In today's Bible story, something bad is going to happen to two men who lived for Jesus. Watch closely how they responded.

Pass out the slips from the "Bible Story Bags." (See the end of this lesson for the contents of this.) If you have a large enough class, use two bags. If you have extra slips, give more than one to each student, but make sure all the slips are passed out. If you don't have enough parts, let the kids share.

SAY: In a moment I am going to read a story that's from the Bible. On your slips you have a word to listen for. When you hear that word, out loud and as fast as you can, say the other word.

(YOUNGER STUDENTS: For younger readers, you might have to help them know what is written on the slip of paper. Then practice it with them several times so that everybody knows what words belong to them.)

Example: Your card says, "Listen for: JAILER / Say: THAT'S ME!"
Practice each of the following parts:

Jailer—That's me!
Prison—Uh oh!
Earthquake—Whoa!
Prisoners—We're bad men!
Girl—I'm free!
Paul and Silas—We follow Jesus!
Beaten—Ouch!
Magistrates—We are important people!
Stripped—Close your eyes!
Said—Talk to me!
Flogged—Hey, that hurt!
Singing—La, la, la!
Jesus—He's the best!
Stocks—How am I suppose to sleep like this!

SAY: Two men named Paul and Silas, who loved God and served God had been telling people about Jesus. They had traveled a long way for a long time, and they had just helped a slave girl, but helping her upset her owners. Now listen closely and get ready to do your parts, and remember you may need to do your part more than once.

(Pause after the words in bold. These are the ones that cue the students' parts.)

Acts 16:19-34

When the owners of the slave **girl** (I'm free!) realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized **Paul and Silas** (We follow Jesus!) and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the **magistrates** (We are important people!) and **said** (Talk to me), "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against **Paul and Silas** (We follow Jesus!), and the **magistrates** (We are important people!) ordered them to be **stripped** (Close your eyes!) and **beaten** (Ouch!). After they had been severely **flogged** (Hey, that hurt!), they were thrown into **prison** (Uh oh!), and the **jailer** (That's me!) was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the **stocks** (How am I supposed to sleep like this!)

About midnight **Paul and Silas** (We follow Jesus!) were praying and **singing** (La, la, la) hymns to God, and the other **prisoners** (We're bad men!) were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent **earthquake** (Whoa!) that the foundations of the **prison** (Uh oh!) doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The **jailer** (That's me!) woke up, and when he saw the **prison** (Uh oh!) doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the **prisoners** (We're bad men!) had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

The **jailer** (That's me!) called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before **Paul and Silas** (We follow Jesus!). He brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord **Jesus** (He's the best), and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the **jailer** (That's me!) took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The **jailer** (That's me!) brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

SAY: Trusting God gives you peace.

ASK: **Why do you think trusting God gives you peace?**

SAY: Even when bad things happen, God is with you and because He is with you not only can you have peace, you can also **make the choice to rejoice**.

Have your class REPEAT:
Make the choice / To rejoice!

Split them into two sides. Have one side say, "*Make the choice,*" and the other side call back, "*To rejoice.*" Go back and forth three times to see which side can be the loudest.

SAY: When things don't seem to go your way, just trust (Have your students repeat: Just Trust) and make the choice to rejoice because...you can always rejoice in God, no matter what is happening because Jesus will never leave you.

Get ready for a Bible Drill

Ready...Philippians 4:4...Go! (Philippians is halfway through the New Testament.)
Read this verse aloud and then emphasize to the students that God wants us to *always* rejoice in Him, no matter what situation we find ourselves in.

SAY: After everything I say, I want you to say: Rejoice!

*When you have a great supper, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When the dog eats your supper, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When, because the dog at your supper, you had to get a Big Mac at McDonalds, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

When, because the dog at your supper, you had to eat a Big Mac at McDonalds, but then you accidentally drop it on the floor, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When your mom picks her nose and your friends all see her, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When someone steals from you, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When a tornado is heading for your house, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When you're watching TV, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When don't get to watch TV because you're grounded, you can...Students: Rejoice!
When you're TV blows-up because you watched too much TV, you can...Students: Rejoice!
Every moment of everyday, you can...Students: Rejoice!

SAY: You can always rejoice because if you've given your life to Christ, God will never leave you and you can always trust him

Control Tool

Leader: *Make the choice* / Students: *To rejoice!*

KEY VERSE

Choose 4 volunteers—Give them the signs that say: In, (blank sign), Give, Thanks.

SAY: The Bible tells us to give thanks but in the first part of our key verse today, we've left one important word missing. Right now it says, "Give Thanks In _____."

ASK: What word do you think is missing? (*Take a few answers*)

SAY: God wants us to give thanks in EVERYTHING (give the *Everything* sign to your volunteer).

REPEAT after Me: "Some Things"

SAY: The Bible *doesn't* say to give thanks in "some" things

REPEAT after Me: "Most Things"

SAY: The Bible *doesn't* say to give thanks in "most" things

REPEAT after Me: "Good Things"

SAY: The Bible *doesn't* say to give thanks in just "good" things.

SAY: The Bible says to "Give thanks in EVERYTHING."

ASK: Does anyone know why the Bible says we should do this? (*Take a few answers*)

Choose three more volunteers—Give them the signs: for this is God's will / for you / in Christ Jesus.

SAY: God's plan for us is to always have a thankful heart.

ASK: But how can we give thanks when bad things happen?

SAY: Like Paul and Silas, we can give thanks and rejoice NOT because we like the situation but...

Everybody hold up one finger ...

1. Because we know that God is bigger than the situation

Hold up two fingers

2. Because we know we can trust God

Hold up three fingers

3. Because God has promised to turn all things to the good of those follow Him.

SAY: Because of this, when bad situations happen in our lives, we can keep our eyes on Jesus and see the situation in a different way.

SAY: We'll talk more about this in the weeks to come...but right now we want you to know that you can...

CONTROL TOOL

Leader: *"Make the choice!"* Students: *"To rejoice!"*

PRAYER PART—"Give us this day, our daily bread"

Choose 2 volunteers to hold the "Lord's Prayer" sign. Ask your kids to say it with you.

SAY: We've been saying the "Lord's Prayer" each week using posters but today we're going to say two times—Once with the posters and once without the posters.

Say the Lord's Prayer together looking at the posters. Then hide the posters by having your volunteers turn around.

ASK: What do you think this sample prayer means when it says, "Give us this day, our daily bread"?

SAY: "Daily bread" is talking about the things we need everyday to stay alive—We all need food and water. In this sample prayer that Jesus gave us, He shows us to ask to God provide our daily needs.

PRAY

SAY: Everybody bow your heads and close your eyes. Now with your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I'm going to call out some of today's prayer requests and as I do, I want you to pray silently for them. *(Pause...Call out some of the prayer requests and then pray.)*

Dismiss to Small Groups

SAY: Right now it is time for our small groups, so I'm going to dismiss you one row at a time.

Dismiss rows of chairs to the tables in the rooms. Give them specific directions where to go.

Thankful Chains

SMALL GROUPS

Give each student several slips of paper that are about 8 ½ x 2 inches (but don't use them all—Keep back at least one for each student). Tell them to write on them things for which they are thankful and to tape them together in circles to form a chain.

You can either send each child's chain home with them or put all the chains together to form a Thankful Chain to hang in your class—You could even have your student add to the chain each week by making more links each time they arrive in your class.

YOUNGER STUDENTS might need to tell you the word and you write it for them. They can also draw pictures to represent things for which they are thankful.

SAY: In today's story Paul and Silas were chained up in jail, but also we saw how they made the choice to rejoice. Now we're getting ready to make some chains of our own. But our chains are different because our chains will represent the things for which we are thankful.

SAY: Write on each link something you are thankful for and then link them together.

Discussion Questions

Below are questions that you can discuss with your students before, after or while participating in today's activity:

ASK: What are some of the things you are thankful for? What are some things you listed on your links?

SAY: Did you notice that no one gave thanks for something bad, but God wants us to give thanks in every situation. Remember, when bad things happen, you can make the choice to rejoice.

Get Ready for a Bible Drill

Ready...1 Thessalonians 5:18...Go!

ASK: Who wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians? (Paul. He wrote this letter to the church in Thessalonica. Yes, this is the same Paul that was in today's Bible story.)

SAY: God says to give thanks in everything. So I'm going to give you one more slip of paper and I want you to write on it something that has happened in your life that you wish hadn't happened or something bad that happened to you.

KEY: Giving thanks doesn't mean you're glad this thing happened. It means that if you've given your life to Jesus and are walking with Him, that because Jesus is with you, you can know that He can even take bad things and turn them to your good. It's not saying thanks to the situation or the person who wronged you; it's saying thanks to God for being with you and taking care of you.

Other Questions

-What is the best thing that has happened to you this school year? After it happened did you thank God for it?

-What is the worst thing that has happened this school year? After it happened did you thank God for it? How and why can you thank God for things like this?

Prayer—Take prayer requests and pray with your students.

Bible Story Bag—Bible Story Parts

Listen for: JAILER / Say: THAT'S ME!"

Listen for: PRISON / Say: UH OH!

Listen for: EARTHQUAKE / Say: WHOA!

Listen for: PRISONERS / Say: WE'RE BAD MEN!

Listen for: GIRL / Say: I'M FREE!

Listen for: PAUL AND SILAS / Say: WE FOLLOW JESUS!

Listen for: BEATEN / Say: OUCH!

Listen for: MAGISTRATES / Say: WE ARE IMPORTANT PEOPLE!

Listen for: STRIPPED / Say: CLOSE YOUR EYES!

Listen for: SAID / Say: TALK TO ME!

Listen for: FLOGGED / Say: HEY, THAT HURT!

Listen for: SINGING / Say: LA, LA, LA!

Listen for: JESUS / Say: HE'S THE BEST!