

The Early Church: Peter's Great Escape

Lesson 5

LESSON OVERVIEW

Key Point: I can give thanks because God is always with me.

Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Story: Acts 12:1-17

Challenge Verse: Hebrews 13:5-6 –“...God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”

Younger option: Hebrews 13:5 – “...God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

ITEMS NEEDED

Each class needs the following:

- Slips of colored paper to be used in making Thankful chains (apx. 2 by 8 ½ inches)
- Something with which to write.
- Scotch tape to put the Thankful Chains together
- Bible Verse Poster (Kindergarten and 1st grade have a shorter version)
- Dry Erase markers or chalk and a markerboard or chalkboard. If neither of these is available, butcher paper on the wall will work well too.

BEFORE CLASS

- Put up the Bible Verse Poster for today.
- Set out any items you need for today's lesson
- Pray for each student by name.

AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

- Greet each student by name as they enter.
- Give each student an attendance sticker for the attendance chart, and feel free to add guest names to the chart. This will give them a sense of belonging.
- Get to know any guests and help them fill out a guest form.
- Be sure to smile—Your smile and attitude sets the atmosphere as students enter.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Control Tool

Anytime you say, “God will never leave you,” students should shout back, “No, not never!” Feel free to have a boys vs. girls or a side vs. side competition to see who can say it the loudest. And remember that students are going to mimic how you say it—so be excited.

Leader: *God will never leave you!* / Students: *No, not never!*

Activity: I Spy

Tell your student that you are going to say, “I spy” and then give them a description such as “I spy something red. I spy something plastic. I spy something with string, etc.” They will go around the room pointing at the things they think you are spying. As the leader, be creative with this, and don’t be afraid to give them some hard ones: the color of an electrical outlet, a paper clip hanging from the ceiling, the color of someone’s shoelaces, etc.

IMPORTANT: For the last item choose something that is *not* in the room. For example, “I spy an elephant.” Keep them going until someone realizes that the item doesn’t exist. Then say, “You’re right. You can’t see an elephant in here, but I spy everyone sitting in the circle on the count of three...1-2-3...Go!

SAY: You couldn’t see an elephant (or whatever item) because it’s not here, but there are things that are here that you can’t see.

Ask the students—**What do you think I’m talking about?** (God, Jesus, angels, air, etc.)

SAY: Faith is trusting even when you can’t see or test it. We can’t see Jesus, but we know He’s alive. We can’t see the air, but we see what it does, just like we can’t see God, but we can see what He does in our lives. That’s faith—to trust something you can’t see.

Illustration

Choose one volunteer—to come up and sit in a chair. Once he sits down, praise him and have everybody clap their hands. “Great job!” Then tell your class that your volunteer just demonstrated trust. He didn’t test the chair before He sat in it.

SAY: Even though you can’t see God, He wants you to trust Him and today’s story will show you a man who trusted Jesus—even while facing death.

(NOTE: Since today is not a very active lesson, if your class seems restless at any point, quickly play “I Spy” again, reinforce the point above about trusting God and continue on with the lesson.)

BIBLE LESSON

Tell the following story while you draw it on your markerboard. Drawing it will help draw the kids attention to what you are saying. There is no right or wrong way to “draw it” but there are some simple suggestions below with each part of the story. Another option is to let your kids take turns adding the different parts of the story. After all, every kid loves a turn at the markerboard.

Tell the Story:

Ask the students—Who remembers something about Peter? (Let several students answer: In previous lessons we discussed how he denied that he knew Jesus, how he later preached about Jesus in front of thousands, how he and John healed a crippled man in Jesus’ name, etc.)
(*Draw a stick figure. Write “Peter” beneath.*)

SAY: There once lived a man named King Herod who was arresting Jesus’ followers. He even killed James, one of Jesus’ disciples and John’s brother (John wrote the New Testament books with his name). Since killing James seemed to please some of the people, the king arrested Peter too. (*Draw a jail bars over the stick figure.*)

SAY: Herod thought Peter was such a threat that he decided to have him guarded by 16 men! Herod was going to put Peter on trial for being a Christian and if this pleased the people he probably planned on killing him.
(*Draw 16 stick-figure guards around Peter and have the students count them as you put them up.*)

Ask the students—What do you think Peter did to escape? (Let students tell you how they would escape.)

SAY: Peter didn’t do anything to escape. He just trusted God, but while Peter was in jail, the church prayed for him a lot.
(*Draw a church.*)

Ask the students—The night before his trial, how do you think Peter felt? How would you feel if you were about to be put on trial for Jesus and probably killed?

SAY: The night before his trial, Peter slept. That’s right! He went to sleep in his cell between two soldiers, chained up with two chains.
(*Draw ZZZZZZZs coming from Peter.*)

SAY: Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a bright light shone in the cell. The angel struck Peter’s side to wake him up.
(*Draw a stick-figure angel.*)

SAY: Peter’s chains fell off and the angel told him to follow. So Peter followed the angel out of the prison. They walked right past the guards to the gate. And then the gate opened all by itself and Peter and the angel walked through it. At first Peter thought he was dreaming, but then he realized it was real and he was free, so he went to where the church had gathered to pray for him. And that was Peter’s great escape—although Peter did nothing but trust God and follow Him.
(*Draw arrows showing their leaving.*)

LESSON DISCUSSION

Let's see how well you listened:

Why was Peter sent to prison? (Because he was a Christian.)

Who came to Peter in jail and told him to leave? (An angel)

What did Peter's friends do while he was in jail? (They prayed)

If you were in Peter's situation and had been arrested by the same man who had just killed a good friend of yours, do you think you would be able to fall asleep?

Why could Peter sleep, even though he was in prison? (Because he trusted God; He knew God was with him and would take care of everything.)

SAY: Trusting God gives you peace, and 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...

Control Tool

Leader: *God will never leave you!* / Students: *No, not never!*

SAY: 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!

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 bad things happen, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When you don't get your way, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

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

*When you get in trouble for something you didn't do, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When you lose the big ball game, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When you pick your nose at school, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

*When someone is teasing you, you can...*Students: Rejoice!

When you get lost in Walmart and feel scared, you can... Students: Rejoice!
When you're in your bed at night, you can... Students: Rejoice!
When you're in the bathroom, you can... Students: Rejoice!

You can always rejoice because...

Control Tool

Leader: *God will never leave you!* / Students: *No, not never!*

CHALLENGE VERSE

SAY: As I read this verse, whenever I say "Never," shout, "No, not never!" Practice a few times.

Read Hebrews 13:5b-6 from your Bible.

KEY: When you're afraid you can say YES to trusting Jesus because *if you've given your life to Him, He'll never (Kids: No, not never!) leave you and He'll never (Kids: No, not never!) forsake you. He loves you and will never (Kids: No, not never!) let go of you.*

SAY: When the worst thing you can possibly imagine happens to you, you can say YES to trusting Jesus because *if you've given your life to Him, He'll never (Kids: No, not never!) leave you and He'll never (Kids: No, not never!) forsake you. He loves you and will never (Kids: No, not never!) let go of you.*

Teacher's Testimony

Has there been a time in your life when you trusted God even though you couldn't see the results or the way out? Feel free at this point to share a brief (one or two minute story) with your students about a time when you did or perhaps did not make the choice to rejoice. Remember to keep it brief though. Also focus on the fact that because you know Jesus, you know He is with you every day and will never (*No, not never!*) leave you alone or let go of you.

Control Tool

Leader: *God will never leave you!* / Students: *No, not never!*

BIBLE SKILLS

(NOTE: Depending on how much time you spent on the Bible Skill section last week, you might want to revisit it or review it, especially if the questions below seem to confuse your kids.)

Quickly divide your class into two teams. (Either boys vs. girls or this side vs. that side.) Today you'll want to keep score on a markerboard or piece of paper. Give each team 10 points for each correct answer.

Ask the students--**How many New Testament books did Paul (who changed his name from Saul and was the focus of our Bible Lesson last week) write?** (Twelve)

Ask the students--**What New Testament books did Paul write?** *NOTE: Go back and forth between the teams only letting them say one book at a time but don't let them name all twelve-- Just five or six*

Ask the students--**Who wrote the book of Matthew?** (Matthew) / **The book of Luke?** (Luke) / **The book of Titus?** (Paul) / **The book of 1 & 2 Peter?** (Peter) / **The books of 1 & 2 Timothy** (Paul) / **The book of Jude?** (Jude)

SAY: Paul wrote all the books from Romans to Philemon. (*Show them on the Bible Book Chart.*) All of these were letters to churches in different towns--That's why they have town names. The book of Romans was written to Christians in Rome. The book of Philippians was written to believers in Philippi. All of these were letters to churches in different towns--except for the last four. These were letters he wrote *to* a young man named Timothy and to a man named Titus and Philemon. These four books are the only one he wrote that contain a person's name, and these are the only "T"-named books in the New Testament. Philemon, though, is not the only "P"-- There is also 1 & 2 Peter. There are two ways to remember this:

Repeat after me:

*If it's a name with T's or a P's, Paul wrote these.
He was a great leader, but he wasn't named Peter.*

Or you can simply remember *Toilet Paper!* Because the initial to toilet paper is T.P. Just remember that Paul didn't write 1 & 2 Peter. He wrote 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon and all of these books are right next to each other in the Bible.

SAY: All the other "Name" books in the New Testament are the names of the people who wrote them.

Ask the students--**So who wrote the book of Philemon?** (Paul) / **The book of John or 1 John?** (John)

Ask the students--**Who wrote the book of Acts?** (Luke)

Ask the students--**Who wrote the book of Revelation?** (John)

Ask the students--**Who wrote the book of Hebrews?** (Although many people believe Paul wrote it or had a hand in writing it, nobody really knows for sure.)

Remind the students how to remember who wrote these books: These are the only three New Testament books that weren't written by Paul and that aren't named for the person who wrote them, but Acts was written by Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke, *two books before it.* John wrote Revelation as well as 3 John, *two books before it.* Many people believe Paul either wrote or had a hand in writing Hebrews and he also wrote Titus, *two books before it.*

LESSON ACTIVITY

Thankful Chains

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 they are thankful for and to tape them together in circles to form one large chain that contains everyone's thanks from their class.

(NOTE: For Kindergarten, some of your kids will be able to write words they way they "hear" them but not all will be doing this yet. These may need to tell you the word and you write it for them.)

Ask the students—**What are some of the things you are thankful for?**

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 the students—**Who wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians?** (Paul. He wrote this letter to the church in Thessalonica.)

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.

PRAYER TIME & WRAP-UP

Control Tool

Leader: *God will never leave you!* / Students: *No, not never!*

Thank God that He is always with you and your students and that your students will always make the choice to rejoice and give thanks when things don't happen their way.

Today as you pray you might also want to specifically mention some of the things for which your students were thankful. Or you might let some of your kids give one sentence prayers of thanks.

List Prayer Requests Here

Be sure to pray specifically for each request above.

EXTRA TIME

Use any extra time to help your students memorize the verse for today.



“...God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”

Hebrews 13:5-6



“...God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:5