

date: 8/13/17

Bible Passage: Acts 12:1–19
(Peter Freed from Prison)

God Responds

REMEMBER VERSE

See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1a

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

There was a season in my life when I was a young single mother with three children. Looking back on those years, I am reminded of God's love and response to my prayers for provision, strength, and faith.

One month, our finances had been tighter than usual and we were two hundred dollars short of rent—not including money for groceries. I called my children to the kitchen table and told them of the challenge we were up against. I knew God would have to provide, so we began to pray.

Shortly after our family conference, I was taking my daughter to practice and bumped into the mother of one of my former high school students. She proceeded to thank me for the influence I had on her daughter while she was in my class. Then she pulled an envelope out of her purse. She said God had told her she was to give this to my family. I opened it to find two one hundred-dollar bills and an eighty-dollar gift card for groceries. I was overwhelmed by the faith and generous love for God this woman was showing to our family.

The effect this gift had on the faith of my children was incredible. Not only did they see God provide in unexpected ways, they saw Him lovingly respond to our prayers—attending to each detail. Some may question my decision to share our financial need with my children. But had I not given them the opportunity to pray as a family, I would have robbed them of the experience of seeing God respond. The faithfulness of God continues to be the cornerstone of the life of my family. My children are now grown with kids of their own, and they often refer back to this experience as a testimony of God's love for His children.

Debbie Guinn
Tru Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

The political climate in Judea during the time of the early church was precarious: King Herod was ruling over Judea as a Roman representative. At the time the church was growing and many people were becoming followers of The Way, pockets of Jewish “zealots” were forming in opposition to the Roman rule of Israel. Herod wanted to stop anything that could escalate an already volatile situation. The apostolic leaders were viewed as having the most potential to begin an uprising, so Herod started taking measures that would—by human perceptions—destroy further growth of the church. He began by killing the apostle James (brother of John) in what appeared to be a systematic plan to eliminate the remaining apostles.

Shortly after James’ death, Peter was seized and imprisoned during the Passover Festival. Four sets of four soldiers were placed as guards for this one man. Wanting to appease the Jews during the celebration of their festival, Herod waited to hold a public trial until after the celebrations. Not only would this give the Jews their festival, but it would allow Herod a larger crowd during the trial and execution and make an example of Peter’s death.

As soon as Peter was taken to prison, a group of believers gathered in a home to pray earnestly for him. God then sent an angel to release Peter from jail and lead him to safety. Peter came to where the believers were meeting and knocked on the door. Peter being released seemed so unlikely, it was easier for them to believe he had died and his angel or ghost (as was a customary belief within the Jewish culture) had come to tell them. After realizing it was in fact Peter, the faithful group rejoiced.

“In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter” (Acts 12:18). It was customary that should a prisoner escape, the supervising guard or soldier would then take the punishment intended for the accused. The unnoticed disappearance of one man while being guarded by so many soldiers was very unlikely. Hearing the news of Peter’s escape, Herod commanded a search be made to locate him. When he was not found, the guards were put to death and Herod left for Caesarea.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

God’s response to our prayers is always filled with love. He hears even the quietest murmurs and knows the deepest longings of our souls. He foresees every need before it is even a part of our reality. We can trust His goodness at all times, in all circumstances. His love never fails—God never fails.

Knowing this truth, how does your spirit want to communicate with God? Is there something you’ve been burdened with for yourself, your family, your church, or your community? Pray earnestly. God will respond to the prayers of His people.

EXPLORE::: 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Link It, Lock It

Later in The Big God Story, children will hear how Peter was locked in prison with several guards attending him. Right now, allow kids to experiment with different types of locks and chains.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- Toy linking chain (or any connecting toys such as monkeys in a barrel, linking nursery toy, paper clips, etc.)
- Bike chains and/or link-to-link metal chains (from hardware store)
- Locks and corresponding keys

SET UP

Place all linking materials and/or chains on the table. Attach the locks to the chains (either a metal or linked-toy chain). Set the keys for the locks down the center of the table.

RELATE

Welcome children. Encourage them to find the keys that will unlock the closed locks of the chains. After opening them, they can relock the chains in different combinations. If you're using a toy linking set, encourage kids to create their own chains and patterns. As children engage with the different chains, ask: **What kinds of things have chains** (ideas: bicycles, lamps, jewelry, gates, swings, etc.)? **Why do we use chains? Are chains strong or weak? What kinds of things have locks** (ideas: doors, windows, cars, cabinets, etc.)? **Why do we lock things?**

DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Ponder Point

God Responds

Chloe's Rules

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)
- Worship music (suggestions: "I Can Sing" and "I Am Listening to You," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)
- Optional: countdown video

RELATE

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

Mail Time

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Envelope (large)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

PREPARE AHEAD

Print or copy the Mail Time envelope art and attach to a large envelope. Print or copy one Remember Verse card and put it inside the envelope.

RELATE

Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with children.

Lead children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

REMEMBER VERSE

**See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
1 John 3:1a**

REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

Lavished: given lots and lots

REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

See what great: Hold both hands open with palms facing away, in front of body, then push out and upward.

love the Father: Draw both arms to cross over in front of chest.

has lavished on us: Extend both arms above head. With fingers spread, keep arms straight as if pushing toward the ground until hands swing down to meet hips.

that we should be called: Cup right hand into C shape. Start at chin and move out away from face.

children: Using right hand with palm down, repeat patting gesture at right side of body.

of God: With right hand open toward left, move upward and then down the center of the face with fingers facing up.

Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [What's/It: People Praying](#) (see optional image in Resources)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

What's/It: People Praying

As soon as Peter was placed in prison, faithful believers gathered together and prayed through the night for him. God heard their prayers and sent an angel to release Peter from jail. These people loved Peter and fervently prayed for him—and God responded.

RELATE

Invite a child volunteer to “spy” on the What's/It by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, *cue the Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What's/It in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What's/It. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What's/It from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

ASK

What is this we've found in the Wardrobe of Wonder today? Children will respond; interact with their answers. **What are the people doing here? What have we learned about prayer? I wonder where we might hear about prayer in The Big God Story. Are you ready to find out? Children answer. Me too ... do you know what time it is?**

The Big God Story

Acts 12:1–19

God Responds

Storytelling Technique: Role Play and Sound Effects

SUPPLIES

- [What's/It: People Praying](#) (see optional image in Resources)
- [Knocking sound effect](#) (see Resources)
- Child volunteers (4)
- Prop box: crown, royal-looking robe (adult-sized), chains, long-haired wig, woman's shawl

PREPARE AHEAD

Invite four child volunteers to play the parts of Peter, two guards (jailers), and the servant girl. Dress volunteer who will play the servant girl with the woman's wig and shawl from the prop box. They can follow the action as you storytell with minimal rehearsal. It may be helpful to select volunteers before the storytelling begins (to briefly explain their parts).

RELATE

Hello, friends! I have a question for you. When we pray, does God answer our prayers? Children respond. **Yes! Because God loves us, He always responds. What does *respond* mean?** Wait to see how children answer. **Respond means “to give an answer.” It could be an action right away, or a quiet answer that we'll hear later.**

God's answer may not always be what we want or expect, but we know God only wants what's best for us. In this part of The Big God Story, we're going to hear about a group of people who pray, and how God responds to their prayers. Before we start, let's ask God to teach us. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

After Jesus went up to heaven, His disciples went all over the land and told people about Jesus and about God's great love for them. More and more people decided to follow Jesus, and the church grew and grew. Friends, what is the church? Pause for responses. When we say "the church," we might be talking about a building. But the church is also all the people who believe in Jesus and follow Him. When we say we're going to church, that means we're going to worship God with other people who love Him!

Begin to utilize prop box; Storyteller wears crown and robe for King Herod. Well, King Herod heard about the growth of the church and he didn't like it ... not one bit. He tried to make the disciples stop talking about Jesus, but they wouldn't listen. They loved God and were faithful to obey His words. Herod ordered his soldiers to capture Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, and put him in prison. Take off crown and robe. Pull chains from prop box; have volunteer playing Peter hold chains with two children playing guards next to him. Herod ordered 16 soldiers to guard Peter, and even chained him to two of the guards so he wouldn't be able to get away.

As soon as the church heard Peter had been taken, they gathered in a home and started to pray. Drop to knees, folding hands in posture of prayer. They loved God, and they didn't want anything to stop Peter, or anybody else, from telling the world about Jesus. So they prayed, and prayed, and prayed—all through the night. God heard their prayers, and He responded! Peter sits leaning against something as if sleeping. While Peter was sleeping, chained to two guards, the other soldiers were outside guarding the prison gate. Suddenly, there was a bright light in Peter's prison cell. An angel woke Peter and told him to get up. And then ... the chains fell off Peter's wrists! Peter drops chains to floor, allowing them to make a loud noise. The angel said, "Get dressed and put on your sandals. Now put on your coat and follow me." So Peter followed where the angel led. As you continue, Peter volunteer walks carefully across stage, passing guards, to volunteer playing the servant girl. They passed by the first guard, and then the second, and soon they came to the big iron gate that led from the prison into the city. As they got close to the locked gate, it opened all by itself! The angel led Peter safely away from the prison and then left.

Peter hurried to the home where the people of the church were praying for him. He knocked on the door. Peter pantomimes knocking, facing children. *Tech: Cue Knocking sound effect.* A servant girl came to see who was there. When she heard Peter's voice, she was so excited that she ran to tell everyone! Servant girl runs away. Where was Peter? Children respond. Yes, he was still standing outside! The girl was just so excited to tell the others, she forgot to let him in. Well, when she told everyone it was Peter outside, they didn't believe her. Peter stood outside and kept knocking on the door. *Tech: Cue Knocking sound effect.* When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were so excited that everyone began talking at once and couldn't hear Peter. Peter wave arms about. He motioned for them to quiet down so he could tell them what the Lord had done to save him. God responded to the prayers of His people!

Friends, God hears us when we pray, and He responds. The people in The Big God Story prayed for Peter all night long, and God responded and sent the angel to free Peter from prison. God listens to us when we pray too. And even though He might not always act in the way we want or expect, He will always respond for our good and for His glory.

RESPOND:: 20 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages](#) (see Resources)
- Crayons

RELATE

Today in The Big God Story, God sent an angel to free Peter from jail. He responded to the prayers of His people.

I wonder ... How did the people feel as they prayed together all night for Peter?

I wonder ... How did Peter feel when he knew God had saved him?

I wonder ... How will I see God answer my prayers?

BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards](#) (see Resources)

RELATE

Close your time today by separating the children into four groups. Have each group remember a different sentence from this blessing:

May you know how much God loves you.

May you pray for other people.

May you remember to trust in God.

May you know that God will *always* answer your prayers.

Have each group stand and say their part of the blessing aloud to the rest of the group in turn. Then speak the following blessing over the children:

Children, may you talk to God often and always trust that He will respond.