

date: **7/23/17****Bible Passage: Acts 16:16–35**

(Paul and Silas in Prison)

God Delivers**REMEMBER VERSE**

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 14:6–7**Inspire**

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

The law firm conference room was still. Although it sat 20 people comfortably, it felt crowded with only the firm’s founding partner, business manager, and human resources director waiting for me. When I sat down, the founding partner said curtly, “We are terminating your contract. Please leave your keys and clear out your office—today.” It was January 30, 2004.

My mind raced. I took this position after 25 years of leading a private law practice. Because God had taken my family and me through a lot in the past few years, I believed that this position was the financial and emotional answer I needed. But it ended after only four months. I thought of the call I needed to make to my emotionally battered wife, who hadn’t signed on for this 30 years earlier when we married after an eight-month courtship. I prayed, “What now, God?”

Many times, God takes the messes of life and reorders them to bring about freedom. January 30, 2004, was one of those times. Although I was rejected at the firm, I had no idea how God would use this experience.

My new practice turned out to be more successful and prosperous than my position at the firm. But this was not the most amazing thing. The most amazing thing was that God had taken me and my family out of a devastating financial and emotional situation and delivered us into a life full of prosperity and hope.

Rick Lund
Mariners Church



Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

When Paul and Silas visited Philippi on their second missionary journey, they encountered a slave girl who “followed Paul and the rest of [them], shouting, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved’” (Acts 16:17).

Her words might sound positive, because she was calling them “servants of the Most High God,” but the people in Philippi worshipped many gods, including Apollo, Zeus, and Artemis. To these people, many different gods were most supreme. Because of this, the girl’s words might have been a distraction and a nuisance, not a positive proclamation.

In Mark 5:7, the man possessed by demons spoke the same title to Jesus. He said, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” In both cases, the demons knew Jesus’ identity. And in both cases, people were delivered from their bondage in Jesus’ name.

Also in both cases, the exorcisms caused civil unrest. In the account of Mark 5, the people were afraid, and they begged Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5:17). In Acts 16, they were indignant and brought Paul and Silas to the Roman officials on charges of “throwing [the] city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for [the] Romans to accept or practice” (vv. 20–21).

But God was faithful to His suffering servants by delivering them from jail and using the situation to bring salvation to the jailer and his family. God provided for the missionaries He had sent to do His work. And the first missionaries knew God as their Deliverer.

Support

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

In this part of The Big God Story, Paul and Silas were doing God’s work and encountered trouble because of it. Sometimes you might feel that God’s call to minister is harder work and more trouble than you had bargained for. Maybe you feel discouraged, beaten down, or confused about why it feels so hard.

Spend some time reading Psalm 91 and getting to know God as your refuge, your strength, and your Deliverer. Let the words seep into the damaged, tired, and broken places in your soul. Ask God to strengthen you with His tender love, to “cover you with his feathers” (v. 4).

In the same way that God delivered Paul and Silas from prison, God wants to deliver you from the discouragement and pain in your troubled soul. He wants to use your community to be His hands and feet, to “wash” your wounds with their support and love. This week, pray God will be near to you in miraculous ways as you allow Him to be your refuge. Then pray He will use you to help the children in your ministry this week know that God is their Deliverer.



SMALL GROUP SECTION

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.

Rock Earthquake (for younger kids)

SUPPLIES

- Rocks (1 per child, medium-sized)
- Place mat or small carpet square

SET UP

Put the place mat or carpet square in the center of an open space in the room.

RELATE

Invite each child to take a rock. Encourage the children to form a circle around the place mat. Choose one child to go first, and ask her to place her rock in the center of the place mat. Then ask the child to her right to put his rock on top of the previous child's rock. Go around the circle and continue having the kids try to stack their rocks. Each time the rock pile topples, start over with another child in the circle and continue to play. Make sure everyone gets a chance to participate.

The rocks toppled over sort of like a mini earthquake. In today's part of The Big God Story, Paul and Silas experienced a great big earthquake while they were in prison. But God used this earthquake to show them that He is the Deliverer, and God freed more than just Paul and Silas through this amazing event.

Earthquake True or False (for older kids)

SUPPLIES

- [Earthquake True or False Questions](#) (see Resources)
- Stapler
- Tape

SET UP

Print the questions and answers and staple them together (questions on top). Tape these to the walls or place in rows on a table.

RELATE

When Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi, a great earthquake shook the earth so hard that their chains were broken! That was a big earthquake! God has power over everything in nature, and He used this powerful event to free His servants. Invite kids to look at the questions and make their guesses before looking at the answers.

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

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

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:6–7

Connect

Question

What is the most dramatic natural event you've ever seen (such as an earthquake, eclipse, or tornado)?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Acts 16:16–35

Storytelling Technique: Images, Dramatic Lighting, and Audience Participation

God Delivers

SUPPLIES

- Optional: [Storytelling video](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- Images: [Ancient World Map](#), [Roman Jail](#), [Stocks](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles



RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **For the last few weeks, we've been in the part of The Big God Story that happened after Jesus died and rose again. We've been hearing about Paul, whom God called to go on a missionary journey. Last week we talked about how Paul was in Antioch with one of the first Christian churches outside of Jerusalem.**

Because God wants everyone to know Him, He sometimes calls people to leave their homes and travel around the world to tell people about Him. These people are usually called missionaries. But a missionary can also be anyone who tells people about God. *Tech: Cue Ancient World Map image.* God led Paul to many places while he was on his missionary journeys. In each place, God used Paul to tell other people about Him. Point out places on the map. **Today we are going to talk about when Paul and Silas went to a city named Philippi (point to it on the map). Philippi was a rich, beautiful city.**

Paul and Silas arrived in Philippi and immediately went to the temple to pray. While they were walking there, a girl followed them and made fun of them. Invite kids to turn to Acts 16:16 in their Bibles and follow along. She was a slave girl who “earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling” (v. 16). A fortune-teller is someone who claims to be able to tell another person’s future. Though Paul and Silas could have ignored her, they recognized that she was being controlled by God’s enemy, Satan, who was trying to stop Paul and Silas from what they came to do. Paul spoke to her and freed her from the enemy of God!

This might have been good for the girl, but it was bad for her owners. She could not make any more money for them as a fortune-teller. This made her owners *mad*, so they “seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities” (v. 19). They accused Paul and Silas of “throwing [the] city into an uproar by [supporting] customs unlawful for [the] Romans to accept or practice” (vv. 20–21). The authorities ordered Paul and Silas to be beaten and thrown into jail!

The jail was underground and very dark. *Tech: Cue Roman Jail image.* Everyone was kept in the same room. And Paul and Silas were put in stocks so that they could not move. *Tech: Cue Stocks image.* It may have been pretty scary in that jail.

How would you feel if you were in jail? Scared? Nervous? Paul and Silas might have felt some of that too. But do you know what they did? From inside the dark prison, they sang praises to God! Paul and Silas loved God so much that even in the worst situation imaginable, they praised Him. *Tech: Turn the lights down.* Sing a short praise song with your kids.

As they were singing, something amazing happened. The Bible says, “Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose” (v. 26). **Wow! This earthquake was huge! God is in control of everything. And He used an earthquake to free His missionaries from jail.**

This was great for Paul and Silas, but what about the jailer? It was his job to keep them all locked up, and now all of the prisoners were free. He would have gotten in *big* trouble if they had escaped! The Bible says that when the jailer saw “the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped” (v. 27). But Paul and Silas hadn’t run away. They stayed at the prison and shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” (v. 28).

When the jailer heard them shouting, he “called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul



and Silas ... and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” (vv. 29–30). God used this situation to bring the jailer to Him. Of course, Paul and Silas had the answer to his question. They said, “‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household’” (v. 31). The jailer washed Paul’s and Silas’ wounds. Finally, Paul and Silas went to the jailer’s house, and they celebrated together.

Though some hard things happened, God, the Deliverer, was there. The word *deliver* is a really cool word. In this situation, the word *deliverer* is not like a mailman delivering a package; it refers to freeing someone. God delivered the slave girl from her bondage to God’s enemy. God delivered Paul and Silas from prison. God delivered the jailer from a life separated from Him. God did all of this because He is good, He loves us, and He wants everyone to know Him.

God still delivers us today. Tell a story of a time when God delivered you from something (e.g., a hard situation in your life, your sin, your fear, your sadness). **He still has power over everything—even earthquakes! He still loves us so much that He wants to deliver us from situations that make us afraid or sad. He still longs to be close to us—to deliver us from separation from Him. God wants our bondage of sin or fear replaced with the joy and peace of knowing Him.**

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

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

Reflect: God Delivers

Encourage kids to look up the following verses in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- Why were Paul and Silas put in jail? Acts 16:18–19
- What did Paul and Silas do while they were in jail? Acts 16:25
- What does the word *deliver* mean? Psalm 34:17; 107:6
- How did God deliver Paul and Silas? Acts 16:26–28, 33–34
- How does God deliver us from hard situations in our lives? Psalm 56:13; 2 Timothy 4:18

Questions for Older Kids

- What is a missionary? Acts 16:6
- Why were Paul and Silas put in jail? Acts 16:18–19
- What did Paul and Silas do while they were in jail? Acts 16:25
- What does the word *deliver* mean? Psalm 34:17; 107:6
- How did God deliver Paul and Silas? Acts 16:26–28, 33–34
- How does God deliver us from hard situations in our lives? Psalm 56:13; 2 Timothy 4:18
- Is there anything you or your family need to be delivered from?



BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

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

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 9 (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Psalm 91:1–2:

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

May you find rest and refuge in God Almighty. May He be your Deliverer and your safe place.

