

34. Paul and Silas in Jail



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34

Paul and Silas in Jail

Leader Notes:

- View [this session's focus](#), faith nurture goals, leader devotional, and story symbol (click on the story symbol to download or print).
- For the full set of DWELL Flex story symbols use the link in the sidebar.
- Need this as a PDF? Just [print this page](#) and choose to save/print as a PDF.

Take a few moments to greet the children and let them know how glad you are to see them.

I love exploring God's story with you. Let's get ready to do that together.

Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

Tell and Wonder

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "Paul and Silas in Jail" aloud (below), pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions. NOTE: It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Pray

Close in prayer, thanking God for keeping Paul and Silas safe, and for the jailer and his family, who believed the good news Paul and Silas shared. Thank God for watching over us in the same way he watched over Paul

and Silas.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #157* or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

*God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.

Easy Extra

Before the session begins, print and cut a set of [story cards](#) for each child and place each set in an envelope.

Give each child a set of pictures. Arrange the pictures together as a group, having children suggest which picture comes next as you retell the story. Have the children color in the pictures and return them to the envelopes. Encourage them to use their pictures to tell today's story to their families at home.

If you're meeting virtually, email or mail a copy of the printable page to parents. As you retell the story, make sure that you hold each picture up clearly on your screen and then ask your group to do the same so that you can make sure everyone is following along with the correct order.

Story: Paul and Silas in Jail [Acts 16:11-40](#)

Another option for telling this story is to use the book [The Prisoners, the Earthquake, and the Midnight Song](#) from the *Tales that Tell the Truth* series. You can find a great video of the author reading this book online.

People everywhere need to know about Jesus! That's why Paul traveled to faraway places and talked about Jesus to everyone he met. Sometimes he traveled all by himself and sometimes his friend, Silas, went with him.

One day, Silas and Paul came to a city called Philippi. When they went down to the river there, they met a woman named Lydia. They told Lydia about Jesus—that Jesus loved her and died to save her from her sins. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved," they promised.

Imagine what Lydia was thinking! Do you think she believed them? (Pause to give kids a chance to think and respond.)

Lydia did believe. She felt God's love in her heart and wanted to belong to Jesus too. So they baptized her and everyone who lived with her. It was a great day!

Sadly, though, not everyone in the city of Philippi believed Paul and Silas when they told them the good news about Jesus. Some people became angry when they talked about how much Jesus loves them. Some people were so angry that they arrested Paul and Silas, beat them, and carried them off to jail.

Can you imagine how they felt? How would you feel? (Pause for responses.)

“Guard these troublemakers very carefully,” people shouted at the jailer. “Make sure they don’t escape!” So, to make sure that they didn’t escape, the jailer pushed Paul and Silas into a little room in his jail and chained their feet and hands. With bars on the windows and bars on the doors, it looked like they would never get out of jail! The jailer slammed the door shut and locked it tight. Paul and Silas looked at each other—what would happen next?

What do you think happened next? *(Pause for responses.)*

Well, they knew for sure that Jesus was there with them, taking care of them in that jail. Even when the night grew very dark and Paul and Silas became sore from sitting with their feet and hands in chains, they knew Jesus would keep them safe.

I wonder if it would be hard to trust Jesus if you were there with Paul and Silas? *(Pause for responses.)*

We can’t know exactly how Paul and Silas were feeling as that sat locked up, but we do know what they did. In the middle of the night, in the middle of the jail, they prayed and sang songs to Jesus. All of the other prisoners listened. What a great way for Paul and Silas to tell people about Jesus—even though they were all locked up. **I wonder what those other prisoners thought when they heard the songs?** *(Pause for responses.)*

But here’s the best part of the story. Right there, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the jail, the prisoners heard another noise. It started as a rumble. Then it grew into a roar—and the jail began to rock! The door to their cell banged open, and the walls around them shook and cracked. Even the chains on their hands and feet flew off. It was an earthquake!

Do you think the earthquake frightened Paul and Silas? *(Pause for responses.)*

Well, yes, it did—until they remembered that Jesus was with them, taking care of them. But there was someone else in the jail who was very frightened. They heard the jailer racing around in the dark, checking the open doors and windows and muttering to himself, “Oh no! If my prisoners escape, I’ll be in big trouble!”

So they shouted into the dark, “Don’t worry! We’re all here.” The worried jailer lit a torch and checked. He counted all the prisoners to make sure they were all still there. Then he fell on his knees in front of Paul and Silas and cried, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

I bet you know what Paul and Silas said! *(Pause for responses.)*

Yes. “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved! And not just you—your whole family too!” And right there in the jail, they told the jailer all about Jesus and how much Jesus loved him.

Do you think the jailer believed Paul and Silas? *(Give the children time to answer.)* Yes, he did believe. And that very night, the jailer took Paul and Silas home with him. He cleaned their wounds and gave them supper. They met his whole family and had a chance to tell them about Jesus too. They all believed the good news of Jesus. It was a wonderful night for everyone, especially when Paul and Silas baptized the jailer and his family.

The very next day the people who had put Paul and Silas in jail set them free and asked them to leave the city. Of course they stopped to say goodbye to Lydia and her family first. Their new friends in Philippi waved

goodbye to them—they knew they were eager to travel on to new places. They knew that many people still needed to hear the good news about Jesus. And they were eager to tell them!

Looking for More Activities for This Story?

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- [Kindergarten-1st Grade: Jesus Sends Paul Out](#)
 - [4th-5th Grade: A Stop at Philippi](#)
 - [6th-8th Grade: Belonging to Jesus](#)
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