



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Acts 12: 5, 7-16

Theme: Don't be surprised when God answers your prayers!

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

This week we continue our theme of 'surprises' by looking at Peter's escape from prison. Peter was imprisoned because the church was causing problems for the people in power. Herod had seen that 'cracking down' on the church had proved very popular with people so he arrested more of them – including Peter.

We hear, in verse 5, how the church was praying very hard for Peter. It might be a question you could ask your group: what do they think the church was praying for? That he would stay well? That he would be treated justly? That he would be released? Or that God would send an angel to help him escape? I'm sure Peter was very surprised when the angel appeared. Rhoda was certainly surprised when she heard Peter knocking at the door of Mary's house – but they weren't the only people surprised in this story. I wonder if the prison guards, Herod and the mob were also surprised to find that Peter had disappeared. I wonder what the prison guards said to Herod? And I wonder what Herod said to the people who were expecting to see Peter put on trial?

Often God answers our prayers in ways that we don't expect – or realise. Sometimes it can seem that God hasn't answered our prayers at all. That doesn't mean that God hasn't heard our prayer – it's often that we just haven't realised that God has answered in a way we hadn't thought of, or hoped for.



Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

Large group game - Cat and Mouse

This is a game for a large group. Two players are chosen – one is the prisoner and one is the guard. The other players stand in a grid formation e.g. four rows of four people. They should be arm's length away from the others in their row and in their column, i.e. each of every four players is standing as though in the corner of a square in the grid. To start with, everyone faces the front of the room and stands with their arms outstretched to either side. This will form barriers going from left to right across the grid, with clear paths between them.

The prisoner and the guard start at opposite sides of the grid. The aim of the guard is to catch the prisoner, the aim of the prisoner is to avoid being caught. They chase up and down the paths between the rows of people but cannot cut through the barriers formed by outstretched arms. They can go round to another path at the end of the rows, however.

Randomly, a leader shouts "change" and all the players in the grid turn 90 degrees. Now the barriers go up and down the grid instead of side to side. Each time the leader shouts "change", the players in the grid turn 90 degrees. The leader should leave varying lengths of time between shouting "change" so that the prisoner and guard never know when it is going to happen next.



Alternative game - Steal the keys

What you need:

A set of keys
A chair
A blindfold

What you do:

Everyone should stand in a circle. In the middle of a circle place a chair with a set of keys underneath. One player is chosen to be the jailer and this player is to sit on the chair blindfolded.

One of the players in the circle is then chosen to try to steal the keys as quietly as possible from under the chair. If the jailer thinks they have heard someone, they point to where they think the noise is coming from. If they are right, then they win and the other person becomes the jailer. If the chosen person gets to the keys and is able to pick them up without the jailer pointing to them, they win and everyone celebrates their success before another jailer is chosen and the game begins again. Ensure everyone gets to have a go. Watch out for the jailer who just randomly points anywhere to win.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the The Message

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+12%3A+5%2C+7-16&version=MSG>

Where can I find the story online?

Under 5s Peter Escapes animation by Slapstick Theatre

<https://youtu.be/eoZXBKVCzBw?si=IJWKQFow-40Gbx1>

Over 5s Peter's Escape cartoon by Superbook

<https://youtu.be/nQIaroQuTkM?si=Pm4Cb4pKvswlmq6a>

Songs to support the story

Under 5s You Do Amazing Things by Preschool worship

https://youtu.be/SbqrCUJJM58?si=-wqzj_gVDoYzJuR5

Over 5s Free by Hillsong Kids https://youtu.be/m8de8Q87z0U?si=ljC-__BCtPk9TPZL

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

New ways to explore the story

There are lots of surprises and action in the story of Peter's escape from prison. Peter was surprised when the angel appeared. Rhoda was surprised when she heard Peter knocking at the door, maybe the prison guards were surprised or shocked, and I wonder how Herod reacted when Peter escaped?



Here are some ways to explore the story to enable you to catch the action, the surprise and all the emotions of the events.

Freeze frame action scenes

With everyone sitting in a circle, retell the story, pausing at key moments. As you pause invite the children into the circle to recreate the scene as a freeze frame. Encourage them to think about what emotions the different people may be showing. Try adding in a wondering question with each freeze frame eg 'I wonder what they were thinking/feeling...?' As an alternative you could make drawings to capture the freeze frame scenes using speech bubbles to capture the thoughts and emotions of the people in the story.

For younger children
Small world play

You will need:

Small play figures.

A large felt circle to create a story space.

Items that will help to tell the story eg something to represent the prison.

Get the children to choose play people to represent the characters in the story. Encourage the children to use the figures to act out the bible story as you retell the story pausing to allow each part of the story to be explored through play.

As an alternative, create some emotion puppets with faces on wooden spoons. Place the spoons in the centre of your story space and as you retell the story stop and ask the children to choose the face of how people were feeling.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



'Gordon's Great Escape' by Sue Hendra and Paul Linnet
https://youtu.be/6BYUCZ6gqxQ?si=Inrzy_5Jmi9si-Ue

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- What do you think: What was the bigger surprise: that God answered their prayers or the way God answered the prayers?
- Who was the most surprised in this story?
- Does God always answer prayers in the way we would want them answered?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you've had any surprises this week? I wonder if God was in that surprise?
- If God could surprise you in any way, what would you want it to be?



What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Rope – Peter was in prison and his hands were tied in chains. Try tying knots, consider using lace up toys
- Pillow – It was nighttime and Peter was sleeping next to two soldiers. Get children to pretend to sleep and make snoring noises
- Toy Angel – An angel came to Peter while he was asleep in the prison
- Torch – A bright light shone in the prison cell – turn on the torch and shine it around the room
- T-shirt & Shoes – The angel woke Peter and told him to get up, put on his clothes and shoes
- Toy House – Peter arrived at Mary's house and knocked on the door. Ask children to mime the action of knocking on an imaginary door, practicing answering
- Surprise Emoji picture – The people were surprised to see Peter. Ask children to act out their best surprised face
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Unlocking Key Prayers

You will need:

A variety of keys

Keys can make us feel safe by either locking or unlocking. Choose a key to hold, sit quietly looking at the key. Think about things you would like to unlock. Perhaps there is something that you want to do but are not sure if you can. What gifts and talents do you have that you want to develop? What challenges do you face that you would like to unlock? How can you open the way for others to get to know God?

As you look at the key talk to God about what you want to unlock and imagine the key opening a door.

Lord Jesus, when we see a key, we remember that you bring freedom.

You are the key that brings freedom from things that worry us.

You are the key that brings freedom from things that hold us back.

You are the key that opens the door to love and to life.

Help us to trust you and to get to know you more and more.
Amen.



Place the key down somewhere where you will see it a reminder of your prayers.



Spoken prayer

Door prayers



Write out a simple prayer - you could use one of the examples below. Decorate the prayers using colours, stamps or stickers. (Younger children may prefer to have the prayers printed out for them to decorate.)

After decorating the prayers, pray them out loud together. Encourage the group to take their prayers home and stick them up on a door at home, so that they can be surprised and reminded that God is with them through the week.

Dear God,
As I walk in,
As I rush out,
Help me remember,
You walk and wait with me,
You run and relax with me.
Amen

or

Surprising God,
Thank you for being with me!
Amen

If members of the group have something they are particularly worried or excited about in the coming week, help them to write their own prayer to remind them that God will be with them whatever the week holds. They can then use their own prayer in the same way.

Not all children will have materials such as adhesive tac at home, you may like to provide each child with a small amount so that they can attach their prayer to a door at home.

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Pop-up Peter

What you need:

- A paper cup
- A piece of fabric (or in a pinch, heavy duty paper towel)
- Two circles of card
- A paper straw or long stick
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers
- A rubber band
- Decorative tape or construction paper
- A pipe cleaner





What you do:

Cut a small hole in the bottom of your cup with scissors.
 Draw a face on one of the circles of card, and draw the back of the head on the other circle.
 Place the top of the straw or stick between the circles and glue them together.
 Cut your fabric into a semi-circle shape big enough to fit over the top of the cup.
 Form a cone and glue the straight edges together.
 Use an elastic band to attach the fabric to the top of your cup.
 Push the straw/stick through the fabric cone and cup, so that the end sticks out the bottom of the cup.
 Place the fabric just under the head and tape the fabric to the stick to secure it.
 Wrap a pipe cleaner just under the head to both hold it in place and to create arms.
 By pulling the straw up and down, you can make Peter pop up unexpectedly.

Minute to win it

Use a timer or follow this link to a digital one:

https://youtu.be/RKy3DUWbHTQ?si=uF_nbp8hYk1rNd3-

Have these four games set up ready so that four people can play at once, then the next four play and so on until everyone has had a turn. If you have more resources, you could set up more than one of the same game.

1) *Release the paper*

You need a piece of paper and a glass bottle.

Challenge: within one minute, remove the piece of paper from under the bottle without touching the bottle or causing it to topple over.

2) *Free the lock*

You need either one box with a padlock on and many keys, including the one which unlocks it OR lots of padlocks and one key.

Challenge: within one minute, unlock the padlock.

3) *Bottle transfer*

You need two plastic bottles, the same size, sellotaped together at the neck and half filled with marbles, buttons or something similar (ensure they fit through the neck of the bottle).

Challenge: within one minute, shake the bottle to transfer the marbles from one bottle to the other.



4) *Release the items*

You need tweezers, small items or even cereal, two bowls.

Challenge: within one minute, move all the items from one bowl to the next using only the tweezers.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- During the week, look out for times when God surprises you or when prayers are answered, remembering that the answer can be “no”, “yes”, or “not right now”.
 - Some people around the world are still put in prison for being Christians. Say a prayer asking God to keep them safe and bring them freedom. Maybe you could find out about one of the charities that supports people in prison.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring **Acts 12** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

Why not have a look at next month's resource on **Identity**

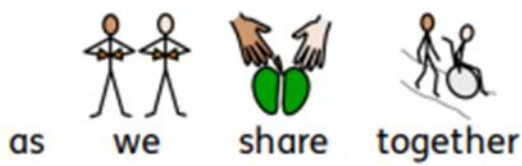




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



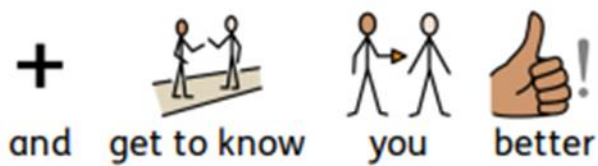
as we share together



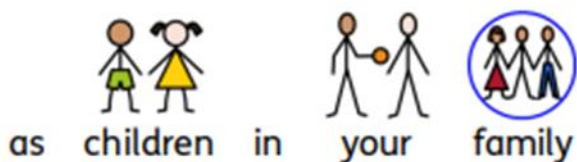
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth

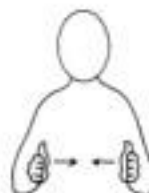




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