

Prison Break | Acts 12:1-18 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To trust God in prayer when life feels out of control.

Icebreaker: When is a time you felt life was out of control but later recognized how God was in control?

Discussion

Transition: The Jewish religious leaders' opposition to Jesus has been increasing throughout the book of Acts. The disciples have been arrested, threatened, and flogged, but the 12 disciples of Jesus were always released or delivered from trouble. Stephen, a young leader, was stoned to death which launched a larger persecution, but the 12 disciples mainly stayed in Jerusalem because they were too popular among the people until...

Read:

Acts 12:1-2

¹It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ²He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

1. What would have been sad or surprising that James was killed?
2. How has the persecution of the church intensified from earlier in Acts?

Acts 12:3-11

⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

3. How is Peter described in the process of this escape?

[Acts 12:12-18](#)

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter.

4. Should those praying for Peter have expected that he would be rescued?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

5. How does God working through these prayers (prayed with the imperfect faith of these people) to rescue Peter change the way we think about prayer?

Read:

[Matthew 10:29-31](#)

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

5. Think of a time recently you were either anxious (worried) or angry (frustrated). What difference would it make to know that God was present, in control, and working for a good purpose in those circumstances?

6. How can we hold together the truths that God is in control, that prayer matters, and that God won't answer every prayer the way we would want?

Sharing and Prayer:

Consider splitting up into smaller groups and have people share about what they are anxious or angry about. Have every person pray for what the person on their left shared.