

LESSON PLAN

PETER IN PRISON

Acts 12

Lesson Memory Verse: John 15:7 – “If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Lesson Aim: To pray and know that God will answer your prayers.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): Can you think of a time when Elijah prayed and knew that God was going to answer his prayer? (Elijah prayed for the rain to stop and 3 ½ years later he prayed for rain to come again; he also prayed for fire to burn up the water-soaked sacrifice.) Would it not be a wonderful thing to pray and know that God was going to answer your prayers just like He answered Elijah’s prayers? Yes, it would! And God wants you to pray, believing that He is going to answer your prayers. That is what we want to talk about in our lesson today.

HE (for Authority): In the Bible we find many verses which encourage us to pray with faith that God will answer our prayers. One verse is John 15:7, our memory verse for today. Jesus gave two conditions for getting answers to our prayers. First, we must abide in Him. That means we keep a close relationship with Jesus; we are to love Him as our best Friend. If we love Him, we will want to know what He likes and what He does not like. We want to please Him. This will help us to know what we should include in our prayers. We certainly would not want to ask for things that would displease our best Friend.

Second, we must let His words abide in us. That means we must obey His commands, claim His promises and live by His instructions. It would be helpful to memorize His words, so we are not so apt to forget them. His words will correct our prayer requests so that they are in harmony with His will.

If we love Jesus and obey His commands (Jn 14:15), we can ask anything in His name, and He will do it (Jn 14:14). Jesus has given us the same conditions and the same promise in his final words to His disciples (Jn 14:14-15 and 15:7). This should give us great confidence that our prayer will be answered just like Elijah’s prayers were answered (James 5:17-18).

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. Let us see how God answered prayer in today’s Bible lesson when Peter was in prison. It should help us to believe that God can also do powerful things for us in answering our prayers when we pray according to His will.

I. Herod’s Persecution - Acts 12:1-4, 6

A. He mistreated (vexed) some Christians (12:1).

B. He killed James (12:2). This was Jesus’ disciple, not His brother. His half-brother was the pastor of the church in Jerusalem (12:17).

C. He put Peter in prison (12:3-4, 6).

1. Peter was put between two soldiers
2. Peter was bound with two chains
3. Soldiers guarded the doors of Peter’s prison.

WE: We may face some impossible situations in our Christian life, but our God can do what seems to be impossible. Do you believe God can take care of us when we face serious problems?

II. Church’s Prayer - Acts 12:5

A. They prayed without stopping.

B. They prayed to God.

C. They prayed for Peter.

LESSON PLAN

WE: When we offer sincere and serious prayer to God for specific people and things, God will keep His promise and answer our prayers.

III. God's Answer - Acts 12:7-11

- A. An angel awakened Peter (12:7).
- B. The chains fell off Peter's hands (12:7).
- C. The angel led Peter past the guards (12:8-10).
- D. The iron gate opened by itself (12:10).
- E. Peter was free from the hand of Herod (12:11).

WE: We must not get discouraged and doubt that God will answer our prayers. He will! God has many, many ways to answer our prayers and He probably will do it in a very different way than we think.

IV. Christians' Surprise - Acts 12:12-17

- A. Peter went to the church's prayer meeting (12:12, 17).
- B. Rhoda answered Peter's knock at the door (12:13-14).
 - 1. She recognized Peter's voice.
 - 2. She forgot to open the gate in her joy.
 - 3. She told the church that Peter was outside.
- C. Christians did not believe Rhoda (12:15).
 - 1. They said she was crazy (mad).
 - 2. Then they said it was Peter's angel.
- D. Christians believed when they saw Peter (12:16-17).
 - 1. They were astonished. They probably figured God would have to change Herod's mind so he would release Peter. But God had a better plan.
 - 2. They were told how the Lord answered their prayers.

WE: We can be sure that God will answer our prayers. We may be surprised, however, as to how God plans to answer our prayers. God's plans are always better than ours. He will startle us many times when He answers our prayers in ways we never expected.

V. Persecutors' Punishment - Acts 12:18-25

- A. Soldiers were put to death (12:18-19).
 - 1. The soldiers were expected to keep Peter, but he got away.
 - 2. The soldiers expected Peter would die, but instead they died.
 - 3. God punished those soldiers who did wrong to God's servant.
- B. Herod was killed (12:20-23).
 - 1. The people called Herod a god because he pleased the people with a speech (20-22).
 - 2. God was displeased with Herod because he did not give God the glory (23).
 - 3. The angel of the Lord struck Herod with a severe sickness that took his life (23).
 - 4. Herod was punished for doing wrong to the church and its leaders.

WE: We can leave our enemies in God's hands; we do not have to be concerned about their punishment. They will suffer in due time for their sinful activity against God's people. What we ask God to do may be answered in a greater way than we expect. God answered the church's prayers above what they expected by having Herod killed so he could never catch Peter and kill him. We, who have trusted Jesus to save us, have a great God to answer our prayers. Read Ephesians 3:20.

BE (for Action): Does God answer your prayers? He wants to answer them. But you must pray! You must pray with love in your heart for Jesus. You must pray with a strong desire to obey the commands of Jesus. Now pray for specific people or things!! That way you will know when God answers your prayers. How many of you will try to pray like the church in Peter's day? (Have them raise their hands. Before dismissing the class, encourage them to tell you when God answers their prayers.)