

A Good Shepherd
Early Church Story
Peter's Great Escape

Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe

Illustrations by:
Tiffany DeGraaf

Good Shepherd, Inc®. 2000
Good Shepherd, a Registered Trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in the U.S.A.

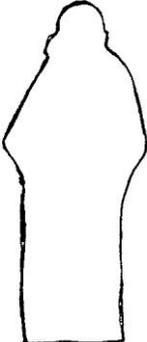
PETER'S GREAT ESCAPE ... MATERIALS

medium wicker basket to hold

- wooden Peter figure
- wooden James figure
- wooden Herod figure
- 4** wooden guard figures
- 2 wooden people of God
- wooden angel figure
- wooden Rhoda figure



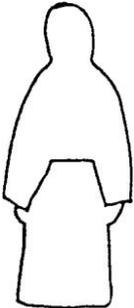
Herod



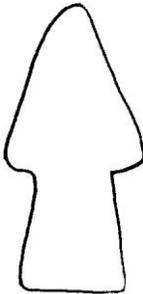
James



Peter



Angel



Rhoda



People of God



PETER'S GREAT ESCAPE ...
ACTS 12:1-19

ACTIONS

Stand and get the story from the shelf, carrying it with two hands. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

Without speaking, reverently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Hold up two fingers as you speak of the two men who walked with Jesus.

Place the Peter and James figures in the center of the story telling area.

Place King Herod slightly apart from the other two figures.

Move Herod close to James and lay the James figure down. Then place the James figure gently back in the basket.

Briefly touch the Peter figure.

Move Herod close to Peter briefly. Then move Peter to one side. Place two guards next to Peter and two slightly in front of them.

Place the scene of the people of God to the other side of the story telling area.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where go to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

All the words to this story of God's people are inside of me. If you will make silence with me, I will find all the words to this story.

Children of God, it was not always easy for the people of God to tell the story of Jesus' love. In this story we will hear about two of the men who walked with Jesus when he was alive on earth.

One was James, and the other was Peter.

King Herod became angry with the people of the Way, those who followed Jesus.

He killed James, the brother of John, who was one of the disciples of Jesus. Some of the Jewish people were glad that Herod killed James.

When Herod found out that some of the people were happy about James dying, he decided to arrest Peter, too.

So, during Passover, Herod arrested Peter and put him in prison. Usually one guard watches a prisoner. But Herod had FOUR guards watching Peter.

While Peter was in prison, all the other people of the Way began to pray for him and his safety.

Lean forward slightly and emphasize the word "wonderful. "

Touch first Peter and then each of the guards.

Place the angel figure next to Peter.

Touch Peter on the side as you speak.

With your arms slightly bent in front of you, move your arms up quickly, as though released from heavy chains.

Touch the angel.

Move the angel slightly ahead of Peter.

Rest your hand briefly on Peter.

Move the angel and Peter past the last two guards.

Place your hands together in front of you and gradually move them apart to show the gate opening.

Move Peter and the angel forward slightly and then remove the angel and place it back in the basket.

It was the night that Herod was getting ready to bring Peter out to kill him that a wonderful thing happened.

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was chained to them so he couldn't get away without them knowing it.

An angel of God came into the prison, and there was bright light in the dark prison cell.

The angel hit Peter on his side to wake him up and said, "Get up quickly."

Then the chains fell off Peter's hands.

The angel said, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." So Peter did.

Then the angel told Peter, "Wrap your coat around yourself and follow me."

Peter did what the angel told him, but he didn't think it was real. He thought he was having a dream.

The angel and Peter walked past the other two guards and then came to the big iron gate that led to the city.

Without anyone touching it, the gate opened and the angel and Peter went through it.

They walked together down one street, and then, suddenly, the angel left Peter alone.

(No actions)

That's when Peter realized he wasn't having a dream. It was REAL. Peter said to himself, "Now I know, without a doubt that the Lord sent the angel for me and rescued me from Herod and all the terrible things that would have happened."

Move Peter near the scene of the people of God.

Then Peter went to the house of Mary, who was the mother of John Mark. Many people were together in her house praying for Peter.

With your knuckles, knock a few times on the floor.

Peter knocked on the door that led into the yard of the house.

Move Rhoda to face Peter.

Rhoda, a servant girl, came to answer the knock. Peter called out to her and right away, she recognized his voice.

Turn Rhoda and move her back, away from Peter.

She was so excited that she ran back into the house to tell the others, forgetting to open the gate and let Peter in.

Touch Peter as you speak.

She told everyone, "Peter is at the door!"

Shake your head.

But no one believed Rhoda. They told her she was out of her mind.

Touch Rhoda and stress the word "insisted."

But she insisted that Peter was outside.

Touch the people of God as you speak.

The others thought maybe it was an angel who would stay with Peter.

As you emphasize the word "still," gesture toward Peter.

Meanwhile, Peter was STILL outside, knocking on the door.

Move the people of God toward Peter.

Finally they opened the door and saw Peter standing there.

Speak very intensely, but softly.

They were all amazed.

Signal quiet by putting your finger to your lips.

Peter told them to be very quiet and then told them how God had helped him escape from jail.

Touch the people as you speak.

Peter told the people, "Be sure to tell James, Jesus' brother, and the other followers about this."

Move Peter away from the scene.

Then Peter left to go to another place.

Touch Herod as you speak.

The next morning when Herod found out that Peter had escaped, he made the guards look everywhere for him.

Speak sadly, and gently place the guards back in the basket.

When they couldn't find Peter, Herod did a terrible thing and told the other soldiers to kill the guards.

Touch Peter, and then move him a slight distance away.

But Peter went on telling people about the good news of Jesus' love; how he died and rose again, so we could all be saved.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder what an angel looks like? And what does an angel's voice sound like?

I wonder if you have ever had a dream that was so real you thought it was happening?

I wonder what Peter thought when Rhoda forgot to open the door and let him in?

I wonder why people didn't believe Rhoda?

Carefully replace all the wooden figures in the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to handle them if you choose this story for your work today or another day.

Without speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Return to the circle and sit down. Be sure everyone has a chance to choose their work before you dismiss the group.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide.

PETER'S GREAT ESCAPE TEACHER HELPS

The story of Peter's escape takes place in Jerusalem during the reign of Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great. This is a story that must have brought great hope to the early church. This wonderful Lucan mixture of reality and miracle is a story that would be told for generations. There are several things in this story that help us tie it historically to the time when Rome ruled Judea. It was a Roman practice to chain the prisoner to the guards. It was also a Roman practice to have different watches of guards. In addition, the probable death of the guards also ties in with Roman practices. A guard was considered to be responsible for the life of the prisoner during his watch. (*Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, p. 744.)

The home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, was probably the sight of the Last Supper as well as the headquarters of the Jerusalem church. So it was a place that Peter knew people would be gathering. Notice that he didn't appear to go to them only for safety, since he didn't stay long. Rather, the author seems to have us note that Peter wanted to make sure that the people of the Way saw him and understood that it was through the power of God that he had escaped from Herod's prison. No doubt he also wanted them to know he was safe as well as understand the power of the prayers they had been lifting up on his behalf

The portion of the story dealing with the servant, Rhoda, is both dramatic and wonderfully human. We can identify with the excited, unbelieving young woman who forgot about Peter standing out in the street in her haste to share the incredibly good news with those inside praying. We find ourselves wanting to say, "Hey! What about Peter?!" and "Believe her. She's telling the truth." This dramatic interlude is one that usually stays with children.

Sometimes adults struggle with the miraculous nature of this story. Remember that the author, Luke, was trying to show very clearly that God is active in history. Even though the story is set in Roman history, there is another force at work here that is bigger than any government or ruler. That force is God. God is the God of freedom from Roman jails. God is the one who answers prayer. God is the one who preserves life, when society would think to take it for one's beliefs.

The first wondering question talks about the angel and what it looked and sounded like. Children will probably describe the angel much as pictures they have seen. Occasionally a child will attribute the chains falling off to the strength of the angel. Don't be surprised to have some super-hero language. Our children are many times the products of television fantasy and will explain the unexplainable in the only way they know.

The second wondering question asks about dreams the children may have had. This question could take the rest of the hour if the children feel comfortable in sharing. Many children remember their dreams, both happy and frightening ones. Often a child's story about a dream will trigger another child's memory. Determine how long you will let the conversation continue, and then move them on to the next question.

The third question puts the children in Peter's shoes as they try to imagine what he was thinking when Rhoda left him standing outside the gate. Some will say Peter was angry or perhaps afraid that the

soldiers would come for him. Others may find humor in Peter being left at the gate.

The final question asks why they think people didn't believe Rhoda. This question will feel quite comfortable to children. Many times they have been in situations where people didn't believe them because of their age. It will be interesting to hear what reasons they give for the people not believing Rhoda. Most likely they will say that the people believed Peter could not have gotten out of jail.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

In this story a miraculous event happened to Peter. What was the most unusual, miraculous or spectacular thing that ever happened to you?

An angel came to Peter to give him directions. Do you believe that angels are sent from God to guide us today? Why or why not? If you answered yes, how do they help us?

Even though the people were praying for Peter they seemed unwilling to believe that their prayers had been answered. Think of a time that you prayed for something, but you really didn't believe it would happen. What is your story?