

A Good Shepherd  
Early Church Story

**Paul And Silas In Jail**

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## **PAUL AND SILAS IN JAIL. .. MATERIALS**

-medium wicker basket to hold:

- wooden Paul figure
- wooden Silas figure
- wooden Lydia figure
- wooden slave girl figure
- wooden jailer figure



Paul



Silas



Jailer



Slave Girl

## **Paul and Silas in Jail ..... Acts 16:11-49**

(part of Second Missionary Journey)

### **ACTIONS**

After speaking stand and get the story from the shelf. Carry it with two hands and return to the circle, placing the basket next to you.

Center the children by gently stroking one or more of the wooden figures.

Place the Paul figure in the center of the storytelling area. Then place Silas next to him.

Move the two men slightly and place Lydia next to them.

Touch the Lydia figure gently, as you speak of her.

Mark the sign of the cross on Lydia as you speak of her baptism.

Move Paul and Silas slightly away from Lydia. Place the slave girl next to them.

Touch the slave girl as you speak of her.

Move Paul and Silas slightly, following them with the girl.

### **WORDS**

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

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

Paul had traveled with Barnabas. But now he was traveling with a different man. The man's name was Silas.

Paul and Silas came to a city named Philippi. There they met a woman named Lydia.

She was a seller of purple material, which was very, expensive,

She listened to Paul and Silas speak. Then the Lord opened her heart to their words and she and her family were baptized. Lydia became a faithful woman of God and a good friend to Paul.

After leaving Lydia, Paul and Silas were going to a place to pray when they were met by a girl who was a fortune teller.

She was a slave girl who made a lot of money for her owners by telling the fortunes of others.

She followed Paul and Silas each day saying, "These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved."

Turn Paul to face the girl as you speak:.

She began to bother Paul who finally turned around and said to the spirit in the girl, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her."

Place your hand in a fist on your chest and then draw it away, to one side, palm out as you speak: of the Spirit leaving.

Right then, the spirit of fortune telling left the girl

Touch the girl as you speak:.

When the owners of the girl realized that the girl could no longer tell fortunes, they were very angry.

Shake your head as you speak.

Now she wouldn't make any more money for them.

Move Paul and Silas slightly to one side.

So the men grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them to face the rulers of the city.

Speak very sadly as you talk of the beating.

The men said that Paul and Silas were doing things that caused trouble for the people of the city.

Place the jailer next to Paul and Silas and move them farther away from the center of the area.

Paul and Silas were beaten very badly and put in prison. The jailer was told to watch them very carefully.

Touch Paul and Silas as you speak. Move the jailer away and lay him down.

So the jailer put them in an inside room and tied their feet with wooden pieces so they couldn't escape.

Begin with hands together, in front of you, and push them apart as you demonstrate the doors opening.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Suddenly all the prison doors flew open and all the chains came loose from every prisoner.

Have the Paul and Silas figures fall down as you speak of the earthquake.

Move the jailer just slightly toward Paul and Silas.

Touch the jailer as you speak.

Stand Paul and Silas up as you speak.

Place the jailer close to Paul and Silas.

Nod your head as you speak.

Touch first Paul and then the jailer.

Move the three figures to the side of the storytelling area.

Make the mark of the cross on the jailer as you speak of baptism.

Move Paul and Silas away from the jail area.

Place Paul and Silas next to Lydia.

Then there was such a strong earthquake that the whole prison shook.

The jailer woke up.

When he saw the doors of the prison open he took out *his* sword to kill himself, because he thought all the prisoners had left and he would be to blame.

But Paul shouted. "Don't hurt yourself We're all here!"

Then the jailer came to Paul and Silas and said, "What must I do to be saved?"

Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord, Jesus, and you will be saved .. you and your family."

Then they told him and the others the story of Jesus' love.

The jailer took them to his house and washed their wounds.

Then all the members of the jailer's family were baptized.

They all ate a meal together and the whole family was filled with joy.

The next morning Paul and Silas were released.

The two men went to Lydia's house where they met with other followers of Jesus. Then they left to go to another city.

## WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder if the girl was happy when Paul told the spirit to leave her?

I wonder how bad it hurt for Paul and Silas to be beaten?

I wonder what songs they sang in prison?

I wonder why nobody left when the earthquake opened the prison?

Place the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

Stand and return the basket to its shelf without speaking. Return to the circle.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose his/her work before dismissing the entire circle.

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

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.

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



## PAUL AND SILAS IN JAIL. .. TEACHER HELPS

This set of stories about Paul and Silas can be viewed at least in two levels. The first, and most important for the children to learn, is the story about Paul and Silas meeting and converting Lydia, casting the demon from the slave girl and finally the miracle of their escape from jail.

The second level of the story gives us insight into both the role of women in the eyes of the author of Acts, thought to be the same writer as the author of Luke. It also gives us insight into the rights Roman citizens had in the first century.

Apparently Lydia was a woman of wealth. She owned a home and dealt in purple goods. She was also a Gentile, a non-Jew, who was a God fearing woman, but not a follower of Jesus. As a Gentile with Roman connections it is very possible that she was educated in both philosophy and business. The Stoic philosophers held that women should be educated, just as men were, so they would be better managers of their households. (Reading the New Testament, by PHEME PERKINS, Paulist Press, New York, 1988 second edition).

Wealthy women were supporters of the church in Luke's writings. And Lydia was no exception. After her baptism, and that of her household (The head of the household made the decisions for her/his slaves and dependents in this matter.) Lydia provided Paul with a place to stay on his journeys as well as a place to meet with other believers for worship.

The next woman in our story is the antithesis of Lydia. The unnamed slave girl has no wealth of her own. Her job is to tell fortunes for money, money that is turned over to her owners. It would be lovely if Paul and/or Silas seemed concerned for the girl. But that does not come out in the story. Rather Paul loses patience listening to her rantings and ravings. Finally, as much to protect himself as help her it seems, Paul commands the demon to leave the girl. It is after this event that the men are dragged before the authorities to be accused, beaten and thrown in jail.

Although the story really goes through verse 40, I have not included verse 37-39 in the story. I feel there are enough story lines for the younger children to track already. But do feel free to use this part in discussion with older children. Paul had dual citizenship as both a Jew and a Roman. It was illegal to beat a Roman citizen publicly as Paul had been beaten. Near the end of the story the magistrate told Paul that he and Silas were free to go. But Paul made a point of saying that they were publicly beaten, which is against the law, and now the officials want them secretly freed. Finally, probably out of fear, the officials came and apologized to the two men and then asked them to leave the city.

The final verse places the men back in Lydia's home meeting with other believers before leaving to go on their way.

The first wondering question seems simple on the surface. We wonder if the slave girl was happy to have the demon out of her. Most young children, and probably older ones as well will say yes. But there might be one child who will hesitate. Hesitation to respond to a wondering question usually means their answer is different from the others. You may have a child say that the girl may not have been happy. This is the way she supported herself. Her owners paid her for being a fortune teller.

Now how would she live? This may be too advanced for any of the children in your group, but always remember the question is a possibility.

The second wondering question asks how badly it hurt Paul and Silas to be beaten. The general response from children will be that it hurt very badly. Be sure to allow children time here, because they will come from their own experience in answering the question. They may remember a time they were hit, either by another child or an adult. Always be aware of children who describe beatings themselves. They can be victims of child abuse.

As they wonder what songs the prisoners sang they will probably come up with answers like "Jesus Loves Me" if they are fairly young. Older children may respond with a general answer about songs that bring strength or hope or songs that praise God. This can be a good time to ask the children which songs from church help them feel better when they are afraid.

The last wondering question asks why no one left when the earthquake opened the prison doors. You'll probably get everything from "Paul told them not to go," to "They were afraid they would get caught again and punished more." Gradually the children will grow in their understanding of what it means to trust God with their lives.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

There are two women in our story today. One is wealthy and one is a slave. How might each of the women be effective in serving God? Which woman would be more effective? Why? With which woman do you believe Jesus would spend the most time?

Imagine that you have been accused of something you didn't do and were severely punished. Afterwards the people who punished you figured out they made a mistake. They come to you and say, "We were wrong. Go quietly out of here and you won't be punished any more." What would you say to them? That's what happened to Paul. Read Acts 16:35-39 to see what Paul said.

Is there ever a time when a person should be beaten for breaking a law? If you answer no, tell me why not. If you say yes, tell me why.

Paul and Silas must have trusted God a lot with their lives to be willing to stay in the prison when the doors had been opened for them to escape. Why do you think they did that? What would you have done?