

The Case of the Prayed-for Prisoner*Philippians***Story-telling Tips**

Ahead of time:

1. Read the Bible verses and story. Pray!
2. Choose story action cues and prepare storyboard figures/Story Scenes, if using. (In Visual Aids book)
3. Practice telling story with the storyboard figures/Story Scenes, timing your presentation. Shorten, if necessary.

During your presentation:

1. Maintain as much eye contact as possible as you tell the story.
2. Put up storyboard figures/add story action cues/hold up Story Scenes as you tell the story. Allow the children to help you put them on the board, if desired.
3. Include the children in your story with a few questions about what they think will happen or words/concepts that might be new to them.
4. Watch the kids for signs that their attention span has been reached. Shorten, if necessary.

INTRODUCTION/ LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

“Our story is called: The Case of the Prayed-for Prisoner. Here is your listening assignment.” Read from Detective Dan’s Listening Assignment signs, but questions are summarized below:

Detective Dan’s Lesson #1 Listening Assignment:

I need to find out:

- 1. Who was the prisoner? Why was he in jail?**
- 2. Who prayed for him?**

Detective Dan’s Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is 2 Corinthians 1:3-4,10-11**

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God...On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”

I need to find out:

- 1. Who did God use to comfort Paul?**
- 2. What did they do that was comforting?**

Detective Dan’s Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:

I found six clues, but only 4 of them are in the story.

They are: a letter, a mouse, some money, Epaphroditus, a soldier, and some medicine.

Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.

I need to figure out:

- 1. Which four belong in the story and which two don’t?**
- 2. Who did Paul thank God for using to comfort him?**

Read the assignment questions, THEN SAY,

“Ok, Deep Down Detectives! Put on your best listening ears and see if you can hear the answers to Detective Dan’s questions. When I finish telling the story, we will see if we can answer all the questions.”

*Read the Bible Truth story, answer questions, present the gospel and lead in prayer.**Answers to questions; the gospel; and, ACTS prayer are included with the story text.*

The Case of the Prayed-for Prisoner *Philippians*

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics) Numbers correspond to storyboard pictures and placement upon the storyboard. Always feel free to use less pictures, if it's best for your kids. Simply black out the numbers next to pictures you do not plan to use. All pictures are found in the Visual Aids book. Put BG (background) pictures on storyboard ahead of time. SB pictures (listed below in story text) are added to board as you tell the story. These numbers are also found on the back of each picture. Tip: Stack pictures in numerical before telling story for easy use. Use sticky-back velcro to attach pictures to storyboard felt. Use sticky-tac putty to stick a picture on top of another picture. OR, if using the Story Scenes to tell the story, disregard the storyboard picture references listed below.

“(SB1) Oh no! Paul is in prison again for telling people about Jesus!” the believers in Philippi exclaimed. Prisoners weren’t taken care of very well. They depended on friends on the outside to give them what they needed. Paul might be cold or hungry. He could be sick or lonely. He could be discouraged and scared. Who was there to help Paul, the believers in Philippi wondered.

God uses His people to help each other keep on living for Him and believing in Him. He uses them to comfort them and take care of their needs, too. These Philippians wanted to be part of God helping Paul. “WE must help Paul!” the believers in Philippi decided. But what could THEY do for him? How could THEY help him? They were in Philippi, and he was hundreds of miles away in Rome. How could God use THEM, to help PAUL, from so far away?

Can you guess what they could do?

The Philippians knew what they could do. (SB2) They could pray for Paul. Perhaps they were far away from Paul, but God wasn’t. He was with Paul all the time and He could do ANYTHING! They could ask God to work in the heart of Nero, the Roman leader, that he would free Paul. They could ask God to keep Paul from getting sick. They could ask the Holy Spirit to comfort Paul with God’s Word and help him stay strong in his faith. Yes, there was so much the Philippians could do for Paul simply by praying for him, right there in Philippi. But there was something ELSE the Philippians could do for Paul. What could that be?

Can you think of what else they could do to care for Paul?

(SB3) They could send a gift of money to him. The believers in Philippi weren’t rich, but they loved Paul was. He was the one who came to their city and shared the gospel with them. (SB4) Down by the river, Paul had told them the good news of Jesus for the first time. Many, like Lydia, heard and believed. (SB5) But Paul’s good news made others very angry. They had soldiers arrest Paul and his friend, Silas. They hurt them and threw them into jail in chains.

Paul suffered like this, so the Philippians might hear about Jesus. He risked his life that God might save theirs! Now it was their turn to do something for Paul, even if it was very hard.

So, the believers worked together to save money to send to Paul. Many chose to do without things they needed. “No, thank you, just one loaf of bread. No, thank you, only three fish, today,” was heard around the marketplace, as some may have chosen to have a little less food on their tables, so they could give more to Paul. “(SB7) Sheep for sale, goats for sale,” others yelled out at the marketplace. These chose to sell some of their own things to get money to give Paul.

(SB8) At last, enough money was collected. Who would take the money all the way to Paul in Rome? (SB9) “I’ll take it,” a godly man named Epaphroditus offered. “I’ll take the money and stay and help Paul,” he said. The Philippians prayed for Epaphroditus and sent him on his way with their gift.

(SB10) Walk! Walk! Walk! Epaphroditus made the long trip from Philippi to Rome. There were no cars, trains, or planes back then. It would have taken weeks for Epaphroditus to get there, but he was happy to do it. Paul had done so much for them. Epaphroditus was eager to see Paul and help him.

At last, Epaphroditus made it to the big city of Rome. (SB11, SB12) Past the temples of the fake, Roman gods and the fine houses. (SB13) Through the busy marketplace. (SB14) Down the winding streets, went Epaphroditus. Finally, he found (SB15, SB16) the house where Paul was being held prisoner. “Knock, knock, knock,” Epaphroditus knocked on the door of the little, prison house. “Creak,” the door opened. Epaphroditus looked in and what did he see?

What do you think he saw?

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

There was Paul, chained to a soldier. He was an old man, now. His body was sick and hurting. But even so, Paul was joyful. (SB17) He was still living for God and telling people about Jesus. He had even shared the gospel with the soldiers who guarded him. Some were becoming Christians! What good news this was!

Epaphroditus stayed and cared for Paul a long time. (SB18) He used the Philippian's money gift to buy Paul food and the other things he needed. He shared with Paul about the Philippians and how they still cared for him and were praying for God to help him. (SB19) He listened to Paul and prayed for him. Oh, how wonderful it was to have a friend to comfort and care for him! Paul loved hearing how the believers in Philippi were doing. The Lord strengthened him as he and Epaphroditus talked about the Lord and prayed together. What comfort God brought Paul through this one man! Paul was so happy!

At last, it was time for Epaphroditus to go. Paul gave Epaphroditus something to take back to the believers in Philippi. He wanted to thank and encourage them. What could a poor, old man in jail give them that would do that?

Can you guess?

A letter! (SB20) That's what! So, Paul got out a piece of paper and started writing. When he finished, he rolled it up and gave it to Epaphroditus. Then, off went Epaphroditus, back home. How sad Paul must have been to see him go. Yet, how happy Paul would be for the Philippians to read his letter!

Walk, walk, walk. Week after week, Epaphroditus traveled. At last, he made it home to Philippi. (SB21, SB22) The believers gathered together to hear Paul's letter to them. This is what Paul wrote:

Dear Philippians,

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for you, I pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now," Paul said. "I want you to know that it's been good for the gospel for me to be in prison. I've been able to tell many people about Jesus, including all the soldiers who stand guard over me. It makes me happy that so many people are hearing about Jesus," Paul told them.

"Even though life in prison is hard, I am full of joy. God is helping me by your prayers and by His Holy Spirit living in me. God will help me to keep on living for Him and telling others about Jesus," Paul wrote. "And one day, God will take me home to be with Him in heaven forever. That will be best of all."

"Until then, I will be praying for you. I will pray that God strengthen you by His Holy Spirit, just as He is strengthening me. I will pray that He would give you joy; and, that you will keep on living for Him and telling others the good news of Jesus. One day, I hope to be freed from prison and come visit you again."

May Jesus give you strength,
Paul

What happened to Paul after Epaphroditus left? (SB23) The Lord had promised that Paul would stand before Caesar Nero, the great, Roman king, himself. And so, he did! Nero heard Paul's case, and no doubt, Paul would have even tried to share the good news of Jesus with him, too. And while Nero did NOT become a Christian, he did free Paul from prison. The LORD had answered the Philippian's prayers!

(SB24) And, though Paul probably never got to see his dear friends in Philippi again, he would never forget them. God had used them to give him strength and comfort when he needed it the most. (SB25) But oh, how sweet would be the meeting of these dear friends in heaven, one day! They had loved each other so well on earth, and now, they would get to go on loving each other forever and ever! And that's what they are doing, even now!

Cracking the Case: (story wrap-up for Listening Assignments)

It's time to see how we did with our Listening Assignment.

Detective Dan's Lesson 1 Listening Assignment:

1. Who was the prisoner? Why was he in jail? Paul was. He was in jail for telling others about Jesus.

2. Who prayed for him? The believers in the city of Philippi.

For You and Me:

Can you imagine going to jail for something you believe in? Paul did, because he knew the good news of Jesus was true, and that people needed to hear it if they were to be saved from their sins. Paul rejoiced to tell others about Jesus and watch them become God's people. We can become God's people, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Detective Dan's Lesson 2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is 2 Corinthians 1:3-4,10-11**

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God...On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."

1. Who did God use to comfort Paul? The believers in Philippi.

2. What did they do that was comforting? They prayed for him, sent him money and Epaphroditus to help him.

For You and Me:

Paul was comforted by the help and prayers of the believers in Philippi. He was comforted by their love and by knowing that God was loving him, too, through them. We, too, can know the comfort of God and of God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. That's how we become God's people.

Detective Dan's Lesson 3 Listening Assignment:

Our six clues were: a letter, a mouse, some money, Epaphroditus, a soldier, and some medicine.

1. Which four belong in our story? The letter, the money, Epaphroditus and the soldier belong. The mouse and the medicine do not.

2. Who did Paul thank God for using to comfort him? The believers in Philippi.

For You and Me:

Paul was comforted by the help and prayers of the believers in Philippi. He was comforted by their love and by knowing that God was loving him, too, through them. We, too, can know the comfort of God and of God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. That's how we become God's people.

The Gospel (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)**Our Bible Truth is:****Why Do God's People Keep Believing in Him?****It Is God's Sustaining Grace...****God Uses His People to Strengthen and Comfort Each Other!**

Why Do God's People Keep Believing in Him? It Is God's Sustaining Grace... God Uses His People to Strengthen and Comfort Each Other. God helped Paul and the believers in Philippi comfort and strengthen each other by the good news of Jesus. They remembered that though they were sinners deserving God's punishment, that God had chosen to save them. He sent His Son, Jesus, to give up His life on the cross as the full payment for the sins of all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. He had beaten sin and death for God's people. He lives and reigns in heaven, caring and praying for God's people, and carrying out God's good plans.

One day, Jesus will come back and put an end to sin and death once and for all; and, God's people will live happy with Him forever. As God's people, Paul and the other believers knew that God would always help them love Him and live for Him... And it was all thanks to what Jesus did! This good news can save us, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Then, as God's people, we can know that God will always help us love Him and live for Him all of our lives... And it will all be thanks to what Jesus did for us.

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

- A** God, we praise You for being the Comforter and Strength of Your People. You help them comfort and strengthen each other.
- C** We confess that many times we forget to pray for others who are struggling with hard or sad times. Many times, we don't take time to comfort and strengthen others who are struggling. We need a Savior!
- T** Thank You, God, for the comfort God's people receive from You through how they help and pray for each other.
- S** Work in our hearts that we might turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us to comfort others with Your Word and by praying for them. Use us to help others in their times of need. Help others to see Your love and kindness as we comfort and pray for each other.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Go to Lesson Plan, p.9 for the script to the rest of the lesson.