

Unit 15: God's People Gather Together**Unit Big Question (and Answer):** Why Do God's People Go to Church?

To Worship God and Love One Another!

Unit Bible Verse: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together." Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV**Bible Truth 4 Concept: To Worship God and Love One Another...****By Telling What God Has Done and Praying!**

When God's people gather together, they share with each other wonderful things God has done. They remind each other of the great things God did long ago in Bible times: how God always kept all His promises and did mighty things to save His people. They hear stories about how God has been at work around the world, bringing many other people to put their trust in Jesus as their Savior. They share with each other how God has been at work in their lives, caring for them and helping them live for Him. Oh, how faithful God has been to His people! Oh, how faithful God continues to be to them! All these stories of God's goodness and faithful helps them to keep on trusting God and living for Him.

But God's people don't just talk to each other about what God has done. They also talk to God about them! All these stories of them. They praise and thank Him for what He has done. They confess ways they have disobeyed Him and seek His forgiveness. They ask Him to do more great things, in their lives and around the world.

God delights in His people gathering together to pray. Jesus tells us in the Bible that when two or more of God's people are gathered together and praying that He will be there with them in a special way. Whether on their own or gathered together, God's people know God will always answer their prayers in the way He knows is best. We can become God's people, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Bible Truth 4 Bible Verse: Ephesians 6:18, HCSB

"Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints."

Learn a Little: "Pray at all times... for all the saints."**Meaning**

"Saints" is a big, Bible word for God's people. God's people pray when they gather together at church. They praise God and they confess their sins to Him. They thank Him for all the ways He has cared for them. They ask Him to do more great things and to help them to love Him and live for Him. There is so much to pray for!

Sometimes God's people get tired of praying. Sometimes God's plans take much longer than they want. It would be easy to stop praying and give up. But there's someone who helps God's people keep on interceding (a big Bible word for praying for others). Who is it? It's God, Himself. Yes, God's Holy Spirit is at work inside of each of them helping them even to talk to God. We can become God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Bible Truth 4 ACTS Prayer

- A** We praise You, God, for saving Your people, the Church. We praise You for Your faithfulness to Your people throughout all time.
- C** God, sometimes we don't want to hear about all the wonderful things You've done for Your people. Sometimes, we don't want to pray for You to do more. We just want to think about ourselves and do what we want to do. We need a Savior!
- T** God, thank You for Your Word, the Bible, that tells us about the great things You did for Your people who lived long ago. Thank You for all You do for Your people today, all around the world. Thank You for letting us hear of Your mighty works, and for using them to help us to keep trusting in You and living for You. Thank You for hearing our prayers to do even more.
- S** God, work in our hearts. Help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior that we might become Your people. Help us to love hearing about the mighty things You have done, long ago and today. Help us to praise You more because of what You have done. Help us to trust You and live for You. Help us to encourage others who gather together with us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Bible Truth 4 Story

The Case of the Amazing Answer *Acts 12:1-18*

Songs Used in Bible Truth 4

Big Q & A 15 Song

Big Question 15 Song: Why Do God's People Go to Church?

Big Question 15 Bible Verse Song: Stir Up Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV

Big Question 15 Hymn: Brethren, We Have Met to Worship, v.1

Big Question 15 Praise Song: Praise the Lord Together

Bible Truth 4 Bible Verse: Pray, Pray, Pray Ephesians 6:18, HCSB

Bible Truth 4 Extra Bible Verse: Take Up the Whole Armor Ephesians 6:13,16-18, ESV

Bible Truth 4 Extra Bible Verse: Help Us 2 Corinthians 1:13, ESV

listen to or download songs for free at <https://praisefactory.org>: Deep Down Detectives Music page

The Case of the Amazing Answer

Acts 12:1-18

**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 Amazing Answer. 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 in trouble? Who prayed for him?
2. What was God's amazing answer?

Detective Dan's Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is Ephesians 6:18, HCSB:**

"Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints."

I need to find out:

1. What kinds of things did God's people ask God to do?
2. How did God answer these prayers?

Detective Dan's Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:

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

They are: a flower, a servant girl, a rug, a jail, leaders, and an angel. *Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.*

I need to figure out:

1. Which four belong in our story?
2. What amazing thing did God's people ask God to do for Peter? How did God answer their prayers?

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 Amazing Answer *Acts 12:1-18*

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

Life was exciting for Christians in the big city of Jerusalem. They told the good news of Jesus to all who would listen. Many people not only listened but believed! THOUSANDS of people had turned away from their sins and trusted in Him as their Savior, just weeks after Jesus had risen from the dead and gone to heaven!

These new believers joined the other Christians as they gathered together as a church. This made the Christians so happy! They wanted everyone to be saved from God's punishment for their sins. They wanted everyone to worship God and love one another. How exciting it was to see the Holy Spirit work in the hearts of so many new people!

But life wasn't just EXCITING for these Christians. It was dangerous, too. For while the Christians were happy about all these new believers, there were others in Jerusalem who were very, very angry about it. These enemies would do whatever they could to STOP more people from believing in Jesus.

Perhaps angriest of all the angry people, were the important, Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. They did NOT believe that Jesus was God's Son, the Savior. They thought Jesus was just a fake.

"We must stop those Christians from telling people about Jesus. They are ruining everything," these important leaders told each other. And so, they began to send soldiers to hurt the Christians and put them in jail. They even began to kill some of them.

But no matter what those leaders did, the Christians kept on doing the very things those important leaders did not want them to do. They gathered together to worship God: they prayed together, listened to preaching from God's Word, the Bible, and shared with each other the amazing things God was doing. They gathered together to love one another, too. They cared for each other's needs, making sure everyone had enough food, clothes, and anything else they needed. And when they left their gatherings, what did they do? They kept on telling people about Jesus, that even more might be saved.

"GRRRR," those important leaders were so mad! They must stop these Christians, but how? All Jerusalem waited to see what would happen.

It didn't take long to find out. Herod Agrippa, the Roman king over Jerusalem, had been looking for a way to make friends with the Jewish leaders. The people of Jerusalem didn't want a Roman king, and often disobeyed him. But if Herod could make the Jewish leaders happy, they could help the people be happy with him, too. Getting rid of these Christians was just the chance he was looking for. So, King Herod sent his soldiers to arrest Christians. He even had them kill James, one of Jesus' first disciples! Oh, no!

Now, the Christians were sad, and the Jewish leaders were happy. Herod liked this. His plan was working. So, he decided to capture and maybe kill another, even more important leader of the Christians. You might even be able to guess his name. It starts with a "P" and he was one of Jesus' closest friends.

Can you tell me his name?

It was Peter! Yes, King Herod knew catching Peter would make those Jewish leaders really, REALLY happy! No telling what Herod could get them to do for him, if he got rid of Peter. "Catch Peter and put him in jail," King Herod ordered his soldiers. And that's just what they did. They found Peter and locked him up.

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

"Guard Peter carefully! Chain him to two soldiers," the soldiers were told. "And put two extra soldiers outside the door of his jail room, just to be sure," King Herold ordered. "We don't want Peter to escape. I will bring him out to the people in a few days and decide what should happen to him then. Perhaps I will kill him like I did James," Herod said.

What would the Christians do now? Their enemies were getting so strong. They had killed James, and now Peter was in jail. What would they do if Herod killed him, too? Should they stop gathering together? Should they stop telling people about Jesus? No, they SHOULD'N'T! Could they try to get Peter out of jail? No, they COULDN'T! Then what COULD they do???

What do you think will happen?

The believers knew what to do. They gathered together and asked for help from the One who could always help. Do you know Who that was?

Can you guess?

It was God!!!!

So, the believers gathered together and prayed and prayed and prayed. "Please, God, help Peter to be brave. Please, God, free him from jail. Please, God, help us to keep on telling people about Jesus," they asked Him.

Day after day, night after night, Peter stayed in jail. Day after day, night after night, the little church of believers kept gathering together to pray for him. But still, nothing happened. Didn't God hear them? Wasn't He listening? Didn't He care?

What do you think?

Yes, God heard them. He was listening, and He cared. But He was doing everything in His perfect way and in His perfect time.

At last, it was the very night before King Herod would bring Peter out, and probably kill him. Once again, the church gathered to pray--this time at Mary's house (the mother of John Mark). "Please, God, make Peter bold and brave. Please, God, free him from jail. And please, God, help us to keep on telling people about Jesus," they prayed. And at last, God answered their prayers with a

What do you think He answered their prayers with now? With a "yes" or a "no"?

With a great, big, amazing YES! Let's see what God did.

Deep in the jail, Peter slept, still tied to two soldiers with chains. Outside his jail room, two soldiers still kept guard. They wanted to make sure this night of all nights that Peter did not escape!

But suddenly, a light shone in the jail cell. God had sent someone to help Peter. Who could it be?

Who do you think?

It was an angel from heaven!

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

The angel struck Peter on the side and woke him saying, **“Get up quickly!”** **“Clank!”** off the chains fell from Peter’s hands and to the ground, by God’s power. **“Get dressed and put on your sandals,”** the angel urged Peter. **“Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.”**

Peter did just what the angel said. He got dressed, then followed the angel through the door, right past the guards, without anyone noticing them. Then **“CREEAK!”** the outer heavy, iron gate of the jail opened for them, all by itself. Peter and the angel passed through the gate and into the dark streets of Jerusalem. **Isn’t God amazing!**

Then, the angel left Peter as suddenly as he came. Peter stood alone in the dark, amazed. The LORD had rescued him! He was free!

Where should Peter go? What should Peter do? Who should Peter tell?

Can you guess?

Peter knew **EXACTLY** where to go and what to do and who to tell! He would tell the other believers!

Peter made his way through the dark streets to the house where the believers gathered to pray. Oh, no! The door was locked. **“Knock, knock!”** Peter rapped on the door of the gateway until Rhoda, the servant girl came. **“It’s me! Let me in!”** Peter whispered to her.

“It’s Peter! It’s Peter! I know his voice! God has rescued him,” Rhoda exclaimed. Rhoda ran to tell to the others the good news, but was so excited that she forgot to let Peter in.

“You are crazy! It can’t be Peter! Peter is in jail!” they told her. How funny that the believers were praying for God to rescue Peter, but didn’t believe He had really done it!

But when Peter kept knocking, and at last, they opened the door. It really **WAS** Peter! Peter motioned for them to be quiet. He had escaped, but how long would it be before his enemies would come looking for him? He must be careful!

Then, Peter shared with the little church the amazing way God had answered their prayers. No enemy could stop God’s people with God answering their prayers! God’s plans would always win! How they all praised God that night for all the amazing things that He had done!

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 in trouble? Who prayed for him? Peter was in trouble. The little church of believers prayed for him to be rescued.

2. What was God's amazing answer? God sent an angel to free Peter from jail and bring him safely back to them.

For You and Me:

God is the same God today as He was back in Bible times. He wants His people to keep on asking Him to do amazing things. One of the first amazing things we can ask Him to do is help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. This is how we become God's people. God loves to answer this prayer and many other ones just as amazing!

Detective Dan's Lesson 2 Listening Assignment: Our Bible Verse is Ephesians 6:18, HCSB:

"Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints."

1. What kinds of things did God's people ask God to do? To rescue Peter from being killed.

2. How did God answer these prayers? God sent an angel to free Peter from jail and bring him safely back to them.

For You and Me:

God is the same God today as He was back in Bible times. He wants His people to keep on asking Him to do amazing things. One of the first amazing things we can ask Him to do is help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. This is how we become God's people. God loves to answer this prayer and many other ones just as amazing!

Detective Dan's Lesson 3 Listening Assignment:

Our six clues were: a flower, a servant girl, a rug, a jail, leaders, and an angel. Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.

1. Which four belong in our story?

The servant girl, jail, leaders and angel belong. The flower and the rug do not.

2. What amazing thing did God's people ask God to do for Peter? How did God answer their prayers?

They asked Him to rescue Peter from jail and from being killed. God sent an angel to free Peter from jail and bring him safely back to them.

For You and Me:

God is the same God today as He was back in Bible times. He wants His people to keep on asking Him to do amazing things. One of the first amazing things we can ask Him to do is help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. This is how we become God's people. God loves to answer this prayer and many other ones just as amazing!

The Gospel (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)**Our Bible Truth is:****Why Do God's People Go to Church?****To Worship God and Love One Another...****By Telling What God Has Done and Praying!**

God's people especially love to share how God saved them. Each one has a special story of how they heard the good news of Jesus, turned away from their sins, and trusted Jesus as their Savior. And it's no wonder they love to tell their story because it is the best day of their life!

We, too, can be God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior. It will be the best day of our life, too! There's nothing better than being forgiven by God and having special closeness with Him! Ask Him to help you have this!

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

- A** We praise You, God, for saving Your people, the Church. We praise You for Your faithfulness to Your people throughout all time.
- C** God, sometimes we don't want to hear about all the wonderful things You've done for Your people. Sometimes, we don't want to pray for You to do more. We just want to think about ourselves and do what we want to do. We need a Savior!
- T** God, thank You for Your Word, the Bible, that tells us about the great things You did for Your people who lived long ago. Thank You for all You do for Your people today, all around the world. Thank You for letting us hear of Your mighty works, and for using them to help us to keep trusting in You and living for You. Thank You for hearing our prayers to do even more.
- S** God, work in our hearts. Help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior that we might become Your people. Help us to love hearing about the mighty things You have done, long ago and today. Help us to praise You more because of what You have done. Help us to trust You and live for You. Help us to encourage others who gather together with us.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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