



Paul teamed up with a prophet named Silas, and a believer named Timothy. God allowed these men to carry His name throughout the Middle East. When problems arose, Paul and Silas learned that our praise invites God's power into our lives.

Day #1: Listen!

Paul, Silas, and Timothy set out to teach the good news of Jesus. They went from city to city encouraging the believers, and telling non-believers that Jesus came to save them.

Amazingly, in some areas, the Holy Spirit told them *not* to preach. The Spirit kept them from preaching in Asia Minor and in Bithynia.

Not everything that seems like a good idea to us is God's perfect plan. Only God knows the heart & mind of every person. Only God knows everything that has happened in the past and everything that will happen in the future. Only God knows how and when a person will be most open to accepting His truth.

Later, in 1 Peter 1:1-2, we see that there was a perfect time for people in Bithynia and Asia Minor to receive God's truth!

God's Holy Spirit guided Paul, Silas, and Timothy during the day and during the night. Because they listened and obeyed God's voice, God used them to grow His kingdom.

† Jesus said: *My sheep **listen to my voice**. I know them, and they follow Me.* - John 10:27

* Do you know that the Maker of heaven and earth wants to speak to you? What a joy and honor that is! Obey God's word and the Holy Spirit's direction. Lean on His wisdom because it is FAR, FAR greater than your own! God wants to involve you in His plan, just like He did Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

Day #2: Free at Last

When Paul and his traveling partners came to the town of Philippi, they met a slave girl who was controlled by an evil spirit. The spirit could tell the future. People would come to the girl and pay money to find out what was going to happen in their lives. We would call her a "fortune teller."

Satan was controlling many people with this one evil spirit. First, the girl was ruled by the spirit. Next, her owners were controlled by greed because they made lots of money from the fortune telling. And finally, all the people who came to have their fortunes read were under Satan's influence. They lived in fear of what the future held for them. They did not know the one true God. If they had known God, they would have trusted Him to be in charge of their futures.

God did not create this girl, or those around her, to be ruled by evil. He created them for freedom! He created them to praise His name and live an abundant life.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul cast out the evil spirit and set the girl free. God's grace always sets people free!

† *For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* - 2 Corinthians 3:17

* How do you think the girl's life changed when she was set free from the evil spirit? Discuss how our lives are different before and after we put our trust in Jesus and are set free from our sinful nature.

Day #3: Inner Joy

The slave girl's owners were furious that Paul had driven out the evil spirit because they would no longer make money from her fortune telling. So they grabbed Paul and Silas. The owners made up terrible lies about them, and had them thrown in jail. But Paul and Silas did not worry or complain. They prayed and praised the Lord.

One of the reasons that Paul and Silas could praise God in jail was because they were filled with the

Day #3 continued:

Holy Spirit. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is **joy** (Galatians 5:22).

Joy is different than happiness. Happiness comes when things are good on the outside - like when you get a birthday present, or you hit a home run. Joy comes when things are right on the inside - it is the inner gladness and peace you have because you believe in Jesus. Joy doesn't change when our circumstances change. Joy is deep down inside of us. Out of their joy, given by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Silas praised the Lord.

 Find a plastic container with a tight fitting lid. Write the word JOY on a slip of paper, put it inside the container, and then put the lid on it. Now you can do anything to the container, but it will not take away the "joy" that is inside. You can scribble on the container with a marker; you can pour water on the container; you can throw dirt at it. But the "joy" will not change.

 *Our hearts ache, but we always have joy.* - 2 Corinthians 6:10a

No matter what happens to you, the joy given to you by God's Holy Spirit will remain. Parents, tell of a time when things were not "happy" on the outside, but your joy remained.

Day #4: Stepping-Stones

Paul and Silas were in what seemed like a terrible place. They were chained up and thrown into the center of a Roman prison. But in the pitch dark, they sang songs of praise to God!

 **Faith** is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see. - Hebrews 11:1

Even though their physical eyes saw prison walls, their kingdom eyes saw God's promises! Paul and Silas were SURE that God had not forgotten them. They were CERTAIN that God would not allow anything that was not BEST for them. So they praised God. Their praise was like an invitation for God to move mightily in their situation. And soon they would see a miracle.

 With your parent's permission, take the cushions off your couch and pretend they are large stones. First, build a "wall" with them. Now, take the "stones," and lay them out in front of you, to form a "path." Notice that the "stones" did not change, but you used them in two different ways.

Day #4 continued:

When difficult times come in your life, you can see them as the bricks that block your way. Or, you can see with Kingdom eyes. You can see that each trial in your life is really a stepping-stone. If you have faith that God does not allow anything into your life that is not for your good, then you can praise God in the trials. Then each trial becomes a stepping-stone to bring you closer to God, and to make His goodness known to others.

Day #5: Earthquake

(IDEA: Sit on your bed for today's FIT. Mom or dad, gently bounce the bed while you read about the earthquake.)

No doubt, the jail keeper, who did not follow Jesus, had heard Paul and Silas' songs of praise. Did he wonder how they could praise while they were in chains? The truth is this: Paul and Silas were in *physical* chains, but the jail keeper was in *spiritual* chains, because he was a sinner.

 *Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.* - John 8:34b

The jailer had drifted off to sleep when something amazing happened:

Suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. It shook the prison from top to bottom. All at once the prison doors flew open. Everybody's chains came loose.
- Acts 16:26

All the prisoners were free to go. It would have been very tempting for Paul and Silas to run into the darkness and escape. Here's how we know that these two men were listening to the Holy Spirit: they did not run away.

The jail keeper knew he would be in big trouble for allowing the prisoners to escape. In desperation, he decided to kill himself. But Paul and Silas stopped him. Even though the jailer had held them captive, they wanted to help him. They told him all about the forgiveness that Jesus offers. That night, the jailer and his entire family put their trust in Jesus.

God did not cause the miraculous earthquake to set Paul and Silas free - He did it to set the jailer free!

 Sometimes God "shakes things up" in a person's life to get them to see what is most important. Pray for someone that you know who does not follow Jesus. Ask God to move in their life. Ask God to use you to speak truth to that person, just like He used Paul and Silas.