

What if... Our Trouble is Really God Doing Something Great?

Philippians 1:12-19

PPT Title

What if Our Trouble is Really God Doing Something Great?

Main Point: God uses troubles to grow our faith and lead others into His kingdom.

Key Verse: *We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.*
- Romans 8:28a

Props: Whiteboard and marker; chains, large heart stickers; lunchbox

INTRO/BACKGROUND



What words come to your mind when you think of a jail? **Write words on the board.** (Examples: cold, cement, bars, locks, prisoners, lonely, sad, scary.) Well, as I look over this list, one word seems to be missing. **Write the word JOY in big letters.** None of you mentioned joy. Why is that?



Last week we started reading Paul's letter to his friends in Philippi. Remember, Paul was in jail even though he had done nothing wrong. He was in jail because some people wanted him to stop telling everyone about Jesus, but he wouldn't. (It's kind of interesting that when Paul was younger, before he met Jesus, *he* was the one throwing believers in jail for telling about Jesus.) All through Paul's letter, he keeps talking about grace and peace and joy. It's hard to imagine someone having all that joy while they sit in a jail cell. Paul must have seen things differently than most people see them. Let's read more of his letter.

BEHIND BARS



Brothers and sisters, here is what I want you to know. What has happened to me has really helped to spread the good news. One thing has become clear. I am being held by chains because of my stand for Christ. All of the palace guards and everyone else know it.

Because I am being held by chains, most of the believers in the Lord have become bolder. They now speak God's word more boldly and without fear. - Philippians 1:12-14

Wrap chains on your arms. Have a rough, burly man come in dressed like a Roman guard. (Philippians 1:13) Ask: Who do you think the guard normally sees and hears? *prisoners, criminals, angry people* (For young ones: Everyone make a tough, angry face!) Say: But now God has put Paul in his jail. Was Paul different from the usual prisoners? *Yes!* (Young ones: Make a kind, happy, loving face.) What did Paul speak about? *That we were all trapped our sin, and Jesus came to take it away!* God used Paul's prison sentence to tell TRUTH and spread God's LOVE to the toughest of characters! **With chains still on, put a big heart sticker on the guard.** Who else could Paul tell in prison? He told the other prisoners (**put a heart sticker on a few kids in the front row**), and the judges (**another heart sticker on someone else**), governors (**another sticker**), and, according to Phil 4:22, even Caesar! (**Put another heart sticker**) Wow. So even though Paul was in chains, he was filled with joy because he saw with kingdom eyes. (For young kids: Have kids use their two hands to make "binoculars" when you talk about having kingdom eyes.) While other people saw his chains, Paul saw God's love

and truth spreading. Also, you know what? Other believers that weren't in prison heard about what Paul was doing. And they thought, "Gosh, if Paul can do all that in *prison*, I can certainly tell people about Jesus wherever I am."

PPT Main Point

Ask: So did Paul have a lot of trouble in his life? Yes! But he had joy because he knew that sometimes: God uses troubles to grow our faith and lead others into His kingdom.

Let's look at the reasons we even have trouble in our lives:

- Sin in the World

SIN IN GENERAL. Back in the beginning, when God made everything, He used a certain word to describe it. Does anyone know what it was? He said it was "good." There was no trouble! No difficult times! No one would ever get sick or die. But when people chose to sin, all the stinky stuff came into the world. Sickness and death became part of everyone's life. These things are in our world because sin spoiled the things God originally made "good."

- Sin in the World
- Mistakes/Accidents

MISTAKES/ACCIDENTS. This is when we do something that goes against God's natural laws. Ask: Who here has ever broken a bone? **Call him/her up front.** Can you tell us what happened? (monkey bars, skateboard, etc.) How did it feel? How long did you have to wear a cast? Was it itchy? You know, God put gravity in place, and sometimes we do things that are fun, but are kind of tempting God's law of gravity. It's not sinful, but it brings pain and trouble. But God can still do something great in the situation. **Thank volunteer.**

- Sin in the World
- Mistakes/Accidents
- Your Own Sin

YOUR OWN SIN. On top of that, we cause more trouble in our own life when we chose to sin. I need a brave volunteer. Is there a leader here who might be willing to talk about speeding tickets? **Call up the volunteer.** So, Mr./Mrs. _____, have you ever gotten a speeding ticket? Is it a sin to speed? Yes, because the Bible tells us to obey the law. What's the problem with speeding, anyway? Do police give tickets just because they are mad at you? No! They want you to **LEARN** not to speed. They want what's best for you and everyone around you. The policeman is trying to correct your behavior. He knows that the next time you're in a hurry, you'll remember that \$100 ticket you had to pay, and you will slow down! **Thank volunteer.**

The Bible says, "For the Lord corrects those He loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights." (Psalm 3:12) Kids, when you choose to sin or disobey, God will have someone in place to help correct you. Most often, He uses your parents to get the job done! God always sees, and sooner or later, He will correct you. In these cases, the trouble you are in (the punishment) is God doing something great - He's teaching you and making your life better!

- Sin in the World
- Mistakes/Accidents
- Your Own Sin
- Someone Else's Sin

SOMEONE ELSE'S SIN. Sometimes trouble comes because of someone else's sin. Sin always hurts people. It always ruins things. **Call up two volunteers and hand one a lunchbox.** What if (volunteer 1) decided to steal (volunteer 2)'s lunch? (Volunteer 2) would be hungry all day. (Volunteer 2) didn't do anything wrong, but he has trouble now. Sin stinks! But God can still do something great in the situation. **Thank volunteers.**

- Sin in the World
- Mistakes/Accidents
- Your Own Sin
- Someone Else's Sin
- Resistance to the Good News of Jesus

RESISTANCE TO THE GOSPEL. And lastly, we see trouble when some people are resisting, or saying "no" to, the message about Jesus. In our country, we are free to speak about Jesus whenever we want. But some people just don't want to hear about Him. They might make fun of the person who follows Jesus, or not want to be friends with him or her. And there are some countries where it's against the law to talk about Jesus! In those countries, people who tell others about the great things Jesus has done can be put in jail, or worse. But God can still do something great in the situation.

Ask: Which one of these applies to Paul at this time? (Allow kids to discuss.) Mostly, in Paul's case, it was people resisting the Gospel. Paul was in jail because some people who lived in the kingdom of darkness did not want to hear about Jesus and they didn't want anyone else to hear about Him either.

I suppose Paul could have hung his head and said, “This isn’t fair! I’m just trying to do the right thing, and look at the trouble I’m in!”

But Paul’s reaction was just the opposite! He said:



...Christ is being preached about. That makes me very glad. And I will continue to be glad. I know that you are praying for me. I also know that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will help me. So no matter what happens, I’m sure I will still be saved. - Philippians 1: 18b-19

For Older Kids: The truth is, the trouble Paul was going through wasn’t fair. But you know what? If you think about it, fair isn’t really what we want! Paul used to do terrible things. But instead of getting what was fair (a huge punishment), he received grace and mercy and blessings, a place in God’s kingdom, and the opportunity to serve God and write out much of the Bible. We have all sinned, but Jesus took our place. That wasn’t fair to Jesus. I’ll take God’s plan over what’s “fair” any day!



For Everyone: Paul saw with kingdom eyes. (Hold up your hands, binocular-style, for young kids.) He saw that God was using the terrible situation to do great things! He saw the good news spreading to prisoners and jailers. He saw light spreading in a very dark place. And in Paul’s heart—*everyone hear this*—he believed it was BETTER for him to go through hard times and let the good news spread, than for him to have an easy life but the good news not spread. I wonder if I’m willing to say that for my life. Are you?

OUR KINGDOM EYES

So what do we do when trouble comes our way?



First off, examine whether you have caused the trouble by your own sin. If you have, there’s some things you need to do. Agree with God that what you did was wrong (confess). You might say, “God, I’ve been lazy about studying, and I thought cheating was the easy way out. But I know it’s wrong.” Or, “Lord, I’ve been really mean to my sister and I know I shouldn’t be.” Then change your mind (repent), and start doing the right thing. Ask God for help. “Lord, help me to buckle down and study.” Or “Lord, help me to be kind to Sarah even when she’s bothering me.” God is so faithful to help you through every bit of this process. He loves when we talk honestly to Him and turn away from our sin (1 John 1:8-10).

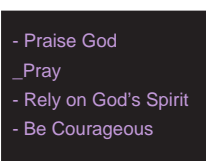


But in lots of cases, it’s not your sin that causes the trouble. If that’s the case, put on your kingdom eyes. (Hold up your hands, binocular-style, for young kids.) Don’t focus on the trouble, but focus on what God might be up to! I want to read a promise from God to you. Everyone ready? (Read, and then have kids repeat it after you.)

PPT Key Verse

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. - Rom 8:28a

Even though you might be in a bad situation, (like someone has been unkind to you, or you broke your arm, or you have to move to a different city) God promises to make something good out of it. Do you believe that? Paul did.



- Praise God. Thank Him for whatever He’s doing (even, or especially, when you can’t see what He’s doing yet).

- Pray. Tell God what you’re feeling and ask Him what He wants you to know. I love praying Scripture. You can use Romans 8:28. *“I know that in this time when...I have to move to another city...or my Grandma is really sick... or I didn’t get on the soccer team I want... or Johnny made fun of me for inviting him to church... God works for my good because I love Him.”* And *“Lord, what do You want me to know about this?”*

- Rely on God's Spirit. If you believe in Jesus, God's Spirit lives in you. Jesus promised that His Spirit will give us everything we need to get through our tough times (John 14:26). He'll give us the words we need to speak, he'll let us know deep down what we should do or should not do (1 Corinthians 2:13, Acts 1:2). He'll give you all the power you need to get through the trouble (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

- Be courageous. Several times in the Bible, God repeats this command and promise: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) Remember last week, we read Paul's words, "I am sure that the One who began a good work in you will carry it on until it is completed." We can trust that God won't leave His work unfinished.

Teacher: If at all possible, end with a personal story of trouble you endured, but turned out to be God doing a great work for you and for His kingdom.

Main Point: God uses troubles to grow our faith and lead others into His kingdom.

Teacher Note: We'll skip verses 15-18a, as the content is not very applicable for kids. We'll focus on the trouble Paul went through and how he saw God's hand at work.