

What Do I Do When Things Fall Apart?

Year 1, Unit 1

dwelling®



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Dwell curriculum has been developed by Faith Alive Christian Resources in cooperation with the Children's Ministry Office of the Reformed Church in America.

We are grateful to Sara Beaver Vogel for her work in developing this unit of Dwell. We are also grateful to April Hartmann for drawing the illustrations in this unit.

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Dwell

Dive (Grades 6-8)

Year 1, Unit 1: What Do I Do When Things Fall Apart?

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 978-1-59255-648-9

10987654321

Welcome to Dwell!

Split-second images, fast-food dinners, instant messages, and intense competition are part of daily life for the young teens who walk through the doors of your church each week. What if church was different? Not more of the same, but less? What if young teens had the opportunity to press “pause” on their fast-paced life so they could “be still and know that I am God”?

Dwell is more than a curriculum—it’s a place where young teens and leaders pause to wonder . . . imagine . . . marvel . . . and dive into God’s story. Developed out of a desire to provide children and young teens with less noise and more time to experience God, *Dwell* creates an environment where young teens are offered opportunities to enter God’s story, and then live into and live out of it together.

For information on the big things in *Dwell*, including the age-level characteristics of the young teens in your group, the scope and sequence at each level, and the curriculum goals and values, visit www.dwellcurriculum.org. Meanwhile, here are some questions and answers you might find helpful when using *Dwell*:

What’s in it for me?

You’re a leader, but you’re also a learner. So we added something just for you to every session. “Reflections” are short devotionals designed to take you deeper into the story with background information, wondering questions, and teaching suggestions. Reading them will help you prepare to teach . . . and grow!

What are “wondering questions”?

Wondering questions invite learners to dwell in God’s story as they consider the people in the story, the choices they made, and how God was at work in their lives. They aren’t a test—in fact they have no right or wrong answers! Wondering questions let you pause and reflect on God’s story longer, allowing it to take root and grow faith. We’ve provided you with wondering questions for every story. Depending on the ages and attention span of your particular group, you may want to pause and wonder during the storytelling or wait until after the story is finished to ask them—feel free to tailor the session to work with your group. And be sure to ask what they wonder about too!

How do I tell stories in a way that connects with young teens?

Young teens know the difference between a story told from the page and one that’s told from the heart. The best way for you to prepare is by reading the story out loud several times at home. (Try doing so once a day for the week leading up to your session—you’ll be amazed at the results.) Each session will also provide you with ideas for involving the members of your group in sharing the story.

Does theology really matter in a young teens’ curriculum?

Just because a curriculum contains Bible stories doesn’t mean it is designed to teach young teens what they need to know. The Re★formed tips you’ll find throughout this guide are your *guarantee* that every story is taught from a *Reformed, God-centered perspective*. It’s a perspective that views the Bible as a story about God—not about biblical heroes or morals or us—and considers every story as part of the one big story of God’s redemption and restoration of this fallen world through Jesus Christ. The Re★formed tip box is your assurance that we take what your group will be learning seriously; it explains our approach in every story you’ll be teaching.

What do I need to know about “Faith Modeling”?

It’s important to *tell* young teens God’s story, but you’ll make a bigger impact when you *live* into God’s story together. One of the ways to do that is by sharing your faith with the young teens in your group. Throughout the leader’s guide you’ll find “Faith Modeling” tips to help you do that.

What do the multiple intelligence icons have to do with how young teens learn?

Studies have shown that people learn differently. If *what* we teach is going to impact young teens, we need to pay attention to *how* we teach. Each activity in *Dwell* pays attention to the ways young teens learn. The icons (see p. 5) are there to let you know which learning styles each activity taps into the most. For more information on learning styles—and a fun quiz you can give your group to find out how they learn best, visit www.dwellcurriculum.org.

What are “story symbols”?

Each Bible story in *Dwell* has its own story symbol. (You’ll find a complete set that you can download free on our website, www.dwellcurriculum.org.) By providing the kids and young teens with a pictorial timeline, these symbols help them see how all God’s stories fit together to form one big story.

During the sessions you’ll use the story symbols to review where you’ve been in God’s story and to wonder about where you’re going next. Here are some suggestions to display your story symbols: hang up a new one each week to form a border that runs along the wall; attach each new symbol to form a “patchwork quilt” on the wall; or clip symbols to a “clothesline” that runs along one wall.

Tip
Rearranging the symbols and having your group re-hang them is a fun way to review the stories you’ve told!

How does Dwell help me partner with parents?

The Dive level of *Dwell* includes a devotional book for each young teen to use at home. Each week three interactive reflections help to personalize the Bible story and doctrine that your group talked about at church. Every reflection includes one or more “Think about It/Talk about It” questions that could be discussed with a parent, mentor, or friend. Let parents know about the Think about It/Talk about It section so that they can ask their young teens about it.

In addition to the Dive devotional to spark faith conversations at home, we’ve provided you with a simple way to send families a message about what’s going on in your group. You can either print and distribute a reproducible letter to families or visit www.dwellcurriculum.org to copy and paste the text into an email to send to families.

You’ll also want to point parents to www.nurturekidsfaith.org, where they’ll discover practical tips for Christian parents and recommended resources.

A few notes about music . . .


For the Imagine (grades K-1), Wonder (grades 2-3) and Marvel (grades 4-5) levels we've put together two song CDs called *DwellSongs*, one for each year of curriculum. On each *DwellSongs* CD you'll find songs that connect with the stories taught at each level as well as Scripture songs chosen to help kids remember specific verses and/or phrases of Scripture. We've also made all the songs available for a downloadable purchase at www.dwellcurriculum.org/music. (We think the whole family will enjoy listening to the *DwellSongs* CDs—you can purchase them for your families or direct parents to them at www.faithaliveresources.org.)


Dive (middle school) Young teens are an eclectic bunch—they have a wide-ranging (and ever-changing) taste in music, and their willingness to sing and dance may vary. Where possible we've provided you with suggestions for songs at this level. Invite your group to bring in their favorite God-glorifying music to enjoy together!


Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Young Teens Learn


How do young teens learn? The answer to that question can be almost as varied as the young teens in your group. Some learn best through words. Others through music. Still others through nature or through movement.


Sessions in *Dwell* curriculum try to respect the many ways children and young teens learn. *Dwell* sessions include a wide range of activities that speak to children and young teens with the following types of intelligence (based on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences). Within each session, the icons below highlight the learning styles represented by each activity. As you teach, you’ll begin to get a sense for how the young teens in your group learn best. Young teens who are


 **Word Smart**
learn best through verbal activities (listening, reading, or speaking), including discussions, worksheets, writing, reading, storytelling, and word games.


 **Number Smart**
learn best by exploring patterns and relationships through activities such as problem solving, logic puzzles or games, making charts and graphs, or putting things in sequence.


 **Picture Smart**
learn best by visualizing concepts. These kids enjoy viewing maps, slides, pictures, videos, and diagrams; making jigsaw puzzles; and expressing their ideas with shape, color, and design.

 **Body Smart**
learn best by using their bodies, acting things out, using puppets, moving—anything hands-on.

 **Music Smart**
learn best through sound, music, and rhythm—playing musical instruments, writing their own songs and raps, listening to recordings, singing, and so on.

 **People Smart**
learn best through doing things with cooperating and working in small or large groups, role playing, conversations, brainstorming, and other interactive exercises.

 **Self Smart**
learn best by working independently through such things as writing in a journal, meditating, reading, and reflecting.

 **Earth Smart**
learn best through activities connected to living things and natural phenomena, through nature walks, examining plants and animals, nature experiments, and activities that focus on ecology.

—The ideas on this page are based on material from the following resources: *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong, © 2000, and a chart prepared by Donald L. Griggs, Livermore, California.

1

Belonging to Jesus

Scripture

Acts 16:16-25; Romans 14:8

Q&A 1*

Focus

I find comfort in belonging to Jesus Christ.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Experience the strength and joy of belonging to Christ.
- Practice seeking comfort in Christ during difficult circumstances.
- Hear stories of other Christians who found hope in Christ, even when they were mistreated and in danger.
- Describe why belonging to Jesus is important to us.

Memory Challenge

Romans 14:8

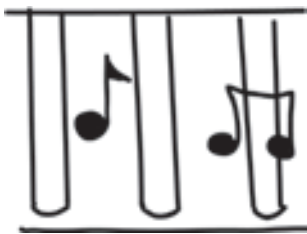
Reflection: Getting into the Story

As you begin teaching these middle school children, please note that the *Dwell* curriculum for this age group changes its focus somewhat. It incorporates more doctrinal summary into each session.

Why? Why not just stick with the biblical stories? What's important about doctrine anyway?

The Bible is a big, sprawling, passionate story of God's relentless love for the world he made. There comes a time in reading and living into that story to summarize some of its truths into a clearer, more concise understanding of who God is and who we are in relation to God.

These young teens are ready to think more deeply about God. One tool that will be used to that end is Q&A: *A Summary of Biblical Teachings*—based on the Heidelberg Catechism. Q&A is a kind of shorthand version of the material the church has used for centuries to summarize and systematize the truths of the Bible.



One more thing: the Catechism on which this summary is based is not a cold or abstract summary of doctrine. It's not just statements about God, but zeroes in on what it means for us to be a child of God. It's biblical doctrine on a very personal level.

That focus is evident in the very first Q&A. "What is your only comfort as a Christian? That I, body and soul, in life and death, belong to Jesus Christ."

The comfort described here is not merely the ease of being comfortable, like the feeling you get curled up by a warm fire with your fingers wrapped around a hot drink. It is ultimate comfort, what remains when everything else falls apart, the comfort that gets us through anything this life throws at us, even death itself.

To grasp the reality of this ultimate comfort, you will be living into two powerful prison stories, one from the Bible and one from recent history. In both stories, believers in Jesus

**For this level of Dwell, we often refer to doctrinal questions and answers. The Q&A's come from Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings, a brief summary of Reformed doctrine based mainly on the Heidelberg Catechism. A copy of Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings can be purchased from Faith Alive Christian Resources at www.faithaliveresources.org or 1-800-333-8300.*

Christ are helplessly caught in deep trouble. In both, the only thing that gets the believers through is their faith that, no matter what happens to them, they belong to Jesus Christ.

What’s pictured here is not a sugarcoated faith or an easy comfort. It’s a sense of belonging that can endure any hardship or danger. The picture of Paul and Silas singing hymns to their Lord while in chains, their bodies racked with pain after being beaten to an inch of their lives, says it all.

Likewise, Corrie and her sister Betsie endure the darkest time and place of the twentieth century, slowly starving to death in a German concentration camp. Neither mistreatment, nor disease, nor the pain of death itself can shake their faith and the ultimate comfort of belonging to the One who held them in the palm of his hand.

As Paul put it in his letter to the Romans, “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Rom. 14:8).

Wondering

- What doctrines have been most meaningful to you over the years?
- How do doctrine and Scripture interact in your faith life?
- Why is it that so often the darkest times bring out the brightest faith?
- What are some of the implications of belonging to Jesus Christ?









Teaching

- You may wonder about the horrors and darkness of these stories and whether they are appropriate for middle school youth. The fact is, middle schoolers live with the very same fears and doubts we all do. They know they can be shot in the schoolyard, struck down by a terrorist, or mistreated by bullies. They need to know what they can ultimately hang on to.
- Your teens are looking for authentic faith, real hope, deep love. Your task in these years will be not just to teach truths about God, but to humbly demonstrate from your own journey of faith, with its struggles and triumphs, what it means to belong to Jesus Christ.

General Materials

Each session of *Dwell* includes specific materials you’ll need for teaching it, such as printable pages or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you’ll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies: Bibles, pencils or pens, whiteboard or newsprint, poster putty, markers, and the like, including a CD player or MP3 player.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activities	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Gathering for God’s Story	5-8	Question Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> None needed	
Entering the Story	10-12	Prison story	<input type="checkbox"/> Dive magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Story symbol (printable page 56)	Aa 
Living into the Story	15-20	Secret worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Candles and matches <input type="checkbox"/> Bible with concordance <input type="checkbox"/> Hymnals and songbooks <input type="checkbox"/> Christian music, optional	 Aa  
Living Out of the Story	5-10	Triangle reflection	<input type="checkbox"/> Dive magazines <input type="checkbox"/> Memory Challenge cards (printable page 53 or 54), one per person <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter (printable page 52), one per person	  

Step 1 Gathering for God’s Story

Today marks an exciting beginning! You may already know some of the young teens in your group, but others you’ll meet for the very first time. Offer a friendly smile to each one who walks through the door. Introduce yourself and learn everyone’s names. Middle schoolers can be a self-conscious bunch, so the tone you set today will help them feel comfortable with you and with the other members of your group. Chat about what they did this summer, the beginning of the school year, or what’s happening around town as you wait for everyone to arrive.

When you’re ready to begin, welcome your group and express how glad you are to be with them. Share your desire not only to be a good leader but to learn with them and from them. Encourage them to come each week expecting to discover new things about God and themselves. Tell them that you hope they’ll feel comfortable expressing their ideas, faith, and doubts; asking questions about God; and sharing stories from their own lives. Ask everyone to work together to help make this group a place where each person feels accepted, respected, and appreciated.

Let the young teens know that each time you meet you’ll begin with a question or short activity to help you get ready to hear God’s Word. Spend a few minutes talking about this question together (be sure to answer it along with everyone else).

If you could have one superpower—like seeing through walls or turning invisible—to help you solve your problems, what would you choose? Why?

Tip

If you’re short on time, ask everyone to share their superpower with the person sitting next to them.

When everyone has had the chance to answer, direct their attention toward today’s topic. Mention that although we don’t have superpowers, we do belong to an all-powerful Savior, Jesus. He knows every hair on our head, loves us more than we can imagine, and promises that he’ll never leave us or forsake us!

Close the gathering time with a prayer from Psalm 121:1-2. Teach the group their line, and practice it once through before saying it together as a prayer:

Leader: I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?

Group: My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Step 2 Entering the Story

Pass out pens and a copy of the Dive magazine for each person. Let the group know that you’ll be using them for the next several sessions, and encourage everyone to write their names somewhere on the back cover. Take time to draw or display the story symbol (printable page 56). You’ll be adding a new symbol each session. See page 3 of the introduction for creative ways to display the symbols.

Tip

Before class, spend time preparing to share Corrie’s dramatic story with your group. Practice reading it out loud with expression and emotion. Don’t rush through the story—give everyone time to look at the photographs, to absorb what you’re saying, and to ask questions and wonder about what Corrie and Betsie experienced.

Ask if anyone has heard of the ten Boom family and the courageous things they did during the Holocaust. Preteens have probably studied the Holocaust in school and may have read *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Tell them that like Anne and her family, the ten Booms lived in the Netherlands when the Nazis invaded their country during World War II.

Ask two people to read the sections called “The ten Boom House” and “Locked up for Showing Love” on page 2 of the magazine. Then pick up where they left off, sharing Corrie’s incredible story. Read all or just a few of the excerpts to your group, depending on how much time you have. But be sure to include “Under the Lightbulb” because the next part of the

session builds on that story. Anyone who is interested can read the sections that you don't read together either after the session or at home when the unit is complete.

Step 3 Living into the Story

After you've shared Corrie's story, ask your group this question:

Imagine that you are a prisoner at a Nazi war camp. What are some of the thoughts and fears you might have? What would be the worst part of it for you?

Allow time for everyone to answer who wants to. Then mention that Corrie and Betsie found deep hope and comfort in their relationship with God, even in this horrible situation. Next tell the group that in a few minutes you'll be recreating the worship service that Corrie and Betsie hosted at Ravensbrück and imagining that you're there too, worshipping along with them. Give everyone 3-5 minutes to work individually or with a partner to think of a song, Bible passage, or encouraging word that they'd like to share to bring hope to other "prisoners." Assure them that they can read the lyrics for any song they'd like to use instead of singing it.

Have a few hymnals or songbooks available, several Bibles, a CD or MP3 player, and any youth-friendly Christian music you have with the lyrics printed inside the album jacket. Also point out pages 6-7 in the magazine, which offer Scripture passages that might be helpful.

Keep in mind that the young teens in your group may have a wide range of Bible knowledge. If a person seems stuck, help him or her look up a few of the passages suggested in the magazine. Bring along at least one Bible that has a concordance so that if someone has trouble finding a verse, you can show how to search for it by looking up key words.

When everyone's ready, dim the lights and light a candle or two (if permitted by local fire ordinances and your building's regulations) as you describe what the imaginary prison camp around you looks like. Speak in a soft voice and try to create an atmosphere of quiet anticipation. Encourage the group to huddle fairly close together on the floor near the candles and away from the windows, out of sight of the guards. Then hold your worship service, asking group members to share their songs, Scripture passages, or thoughts. Wait until the end to share your portion.

When it's your turn, tell your fellow "prisoners" that you'd like to read two things—the first is a Bible passage that describes how Paul and Silas responded to being unfairly imprisoned, the second is a statement of faith made by Christians long ago.

Read Acts 16:16-25 with expression from a modern translation of the Bible or a paraphrase such as *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. Comment on what a powerful example Paul and Silas are for you. Then read Q&A 1 from the Dive magazine (p. 8). Briefly (2-3 minutes at most) share what it means to you to belong to Jesus and why you find that truth so comforting—especially during hard times.

End your secret service by blowing out the candles and turning on the lights.

Faith Modeling

This is a chance for everyone to practice an important aspect of Christian living. During hard times, we need to know where to look in Scripture to find words of comfort, hope, and encouragement!

Re★formed

Our doctrine summarizes biblical truth and helps us understand how to apply Scripture to our everyday lives. In this case, Q&A 1 declares with conviction what Acts 16:16-25 describes through story—in times of hardship we depend on Jesus, who offers us lasting comfort, peace, and joy.

Faith Modeling

Young teens understand what it means to belong to a family, a sports team, or a group of friends, but belonging to Jesus is a more abstract idea. For them, comfort usually comes in the form of hugs or soothing words. The hope we have in Jesus is different.

As you prepare for this session, consider what Jesus means to you, and think of some specific ways you turn to him in hard times and find his presence to be your comfort. Speak briefly, but from the heart—your experience will provide a living, breathing example of what Christ’s love can mean for their lives as well.

Tip

Be sure to send the family letter home with kids today so parents and guardians know what’s going on with your group. If you prefer, go to www.dwellcurriculum.org to find a version of the family letter that you can send by email.

Tip

Copy the Memory Challenge cards onto cardstock, then cut them apart to distribute to the group. To help encourage kids to use the cards, consider punching a hole in each and attaching it to a key ring or small carabiner.

Step 4 Living Out of the Story

Move back to your usual seats and tell the group that although your lives are *very* different from the lives of the people in this week’s stories, you *do* go through some very hard times and sad experiences. You face real fears, pain, and disappointment. Assure everyone that just like Corrie, Betsie, Paul, and Silas, we can find hope and comfort in knowing that we belong to the Savior of the world, who is with us in all circumstances, and who has a purpose and plan for each of our lives!

Ask everyone to open their magazines once more to page 8, and hand out pencils or pens. Mention that the triangle that appears on that page is similar to one that the ten Booms put in the window of their clock shop. It was a signal to their partners and to those who needed help that the coast was clear and it was safe to enter the hiding place. Let your young teens know that for the prisoners we’ve read about today and for us too, Jesus is the safest hiding place. He welcomes us to enter his presence in prayer and find healing, peace, and security in our relationship with him.

Give the group 3-5 minutes to reflect individually or pray silently about the questions in the triangle. Play Christian music quietly in the background (for ideas see Easy Extras on pp. 10-11). When everyone is finished, close your time together in prayer, thanking God that you belong to Jesus and asking God to use each one of you to offer encouragement and hope to others this week.

Thank everyone for joining you for the first session, and let them know you’re hoping to see them again next week! As they leave, hand out the Memory Challenge cards from printable page 53 or 54 and collect the magazines. Store them somewhere in the room for upcoming weeks.

Easy Extras

Here are some additional ideas you may choose to use along with or in place of the activities suggested for this session:

1. Extra Questions

Option for Step 1: Gathering for God’s Story.

Time: 5-8 minutes

Materials: none

You may want to use one of these questions in place of the one suggested for the gathering time:

- **What are the three hardest things you see people your age facing?**
- **What was the best thing that happened to you this week? What was the worst?**

2. Invite a Guest **Aa**

Option for Step 2: Entering the Story.

Time: 10-12 minutes

Materials: guest speaker and books, maps, or photographs; optional

Instead of sharing excerpts from *The Hiding Place*, you may want to invite a guest to share a personal story of God’s sustaining love through suffering or persecution. If possible, meet with the guest speaker in advance or talk by phone to hear the story and offer feedback about what’s relevant and age-appropriate for middle schoolers.

Keep in mind that some of the young teens in your group may have their own stories of persecution and suffering that they or their families have experienced as refugees or immigrants. Give them space to share their stories with the group if they'd like to, but be sensitive to the strong feelings that might be associated with these memories. Pray as a group for their comfort and peace and the ongoing safety of their families.

If some or all of the young teens in your group come from cultures or countries that have experienced persecution similar to that experienced by the ten Booms or Paul and Silas, you may be able to find a story that's more meaningful to the children than *The Hiding Place*. For example, Laotian, Cambodian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hispanic, South African, Sudanese, Palestinian, First Nation, Native American, and African American people, as well as many, many others, have suffered or are suffering persecution of various kinds and intensities. For ideas, speak to families within your church community, visit your local library, or contact the world relief and mission organizations associated with your church.

3. Meaningful Music 🎵 👤

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: iPod or MP3 player with speakers, online access to downloadable music, or a CD player and the CDs listed below

If you have a little extra time and access to an iPod or other MP3 player or CD player, play a song that relates to today's session. Here are some ideas:

- “You Are My World” by The Washington Projects, from the album *Light Up the Dark*
- “You Are My Hope” by Skillet, from the album *Alien Youth*
- “My Hope Is in You” by Third Day, from the album *Offerings*

Or choose another song that focuses on Christ as our hope and our help. Use the song either during the worship service in Step 2 or during the time of reflection in Step 4. Play some or all of it, and encourage everyone to listen and make it their prayer.

4. Pray for the Persecuted Church 🙏 🌐

Time: 5-8 minutes

Materials: computer with Internet access, printer, globe or world map; optional

As part of your closing prayer, you may want to remember Christians around the world who face intense persecution every day. Visit www.idop.org, the website for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, and look under “Resources” to download the most recent prayer map. Involve the young teens in prayer by encouraging each of them to lift up the Christians in one or more of the countries that are included in the prayer map.

5. Prisoners of the Bible Crossword Puzzle Aa 📖

Time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: Printable page 55, one copy per person

If some people in your group arrive early, stay late, or finish any of the activities before others, they may enjoy working on the “Prisoners of the Bible” crossword puzzle. Make as many copies ahead of time as you think you might use.

6. Memory Challenge Ideas

Dive offers selected portions of Scripture for memorization. Within a given unit, some repetition of the Memory Challenges occurs to help everyone retain the memorized verses for a longer period of time. You'll also notice that within the overall *Dwell* curriculum many Scripture passages suggested for memorization reappear at the various levels.

Here are some suggestions for learning the Memory Challenge during your sessions:

Chain Reaction

One person begins saying the Memory Challenge. At a signal from you, he or she stops, and you point to another person, who takes over where the first person left off. This keeps everyone alert and involved!

Tip

You can help your group learn the Memory Challenge during each session by using one or more of the suggestions described here.

Naturally, you will want to learn all assigned Memory Challenges along with the young teens.

Disappearing Words

Before the session begins, write the Bible verse on a board/newsprint. Have everyone say it together. Then erase a few words. Have everyone say it again, remembering the erased words. Continue erasing words and repeating until almost all of the Memory Challenge has been erased.

Reading

Have young teens divide the Scripture passage into a responsive reading for two groups. Group 1 reads a line, group 2 reads the next, and so on. This would make a nice ending to the gathering step, or a nice close of the session before final prayer.

Writing the Passage

Ask the group to write the passage on note cards from memory. When you give young teens a choice of either writing or reciting, you enable them to show their mastery of the material in a way that feels most comfortable to them.

Reciting in Unison

Instead of calling on individuals to recite, have the entire group say all or part of the passage in unison. This can work well whenever the passage is read during the session—pause and ask everyone to repeat it along with the reader.

2

What We Need to Know

Scripture

Acts 16:25-40
Q&A 2

Focus

My heart knows three things that assure me I belong to Jesus. First, how I sin everyday; second, how Jesus saves me from my sin; and third, how I can show my thanks by serving God.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Imagine ourselves in the place of the jailer in today's story.
- Be aware of our own sin and need for a Savior.
- Identify ways to show thanks to God for the salvation he gives us through Christ.

Memory Challenge

Acts 16:31a

Reflection: Getting into the Story

In the first session we focused on the first half of this amazing story. We saw what faith meant and looked like in the most difficult circumstances. Paul and Silas, beaten, chained, and exhausted, sang songs of praise to the God to whom they belonged. Their vibrant faith served as a testimony to their fellow prisoners, and, we marvel, to their hard-bitten jailer.

The jailer was almost certainly a cynical, tough, retired Roman soldier. Any sensitivity or gentleness had been squeezed out of him by his hard experience as a soldier and the expected cruelty of an imperial jailer. His first thought after discovering the prison's open doors was to assume the prisoners had escaped. His only recourse, suicide. But before he could fall on his sword, Paul stopped him. "Don't harm yourself; we're all here!"

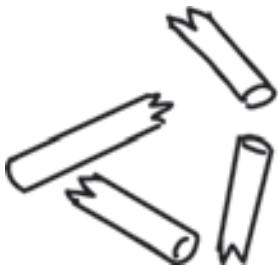
Kneeling, trembling at the apostles' feet, this cruel agent of Roman punishment asked Paul and Silas the strangest question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Where did that come from? Part of the explanation may come from the fact that the jailer was on the premises and had heard the strange sounds of Paul and Silas's singing. Perhaps he wondered what kind of God inspired singing in jail. But there is a mystery here too—the mystery of how anyone comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Only God's Spirit, working in the human heart, can cause such a change.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." The apostle's reply is certainly a summary of a long conversation, with many questions and answers and many stories about Jesus. The result was a miracle of salvation as the jailer believed, and he with his entire household was baptized.

Note that the jailer's household is mentioned twice. Often in Acts, Luke emphasizes that one person's coming to faith affects the entire household. Coming to faith isn't just an individual experience; it happens within a natural social context such as a family or a community. That's one reason why we baptize not only adults but their children.

The Q&A for today asks, "What must you know to have this comfort [of belonging to Jesus]?"



This sounds very much like a merely cognitive thing, knowing and accepting certain facts. It's clear that the jailer had to know some things about Jesus to put his faith in him. But the knowledge we need is more than head knowledge, it's heart knowledge. It's the personal, heartfelt recognition of my own sin, it's trusting in Jesus with all my heart, and it's making the commitment to live for him.

The Q&A (and the catechism on which it's based) describes this knowledge in three steps, sometimes summarized as guilt, grace, and gratitude. Of course, this is not a rigidly programmed process of salvation. While containing these three elements, the pattern may be different in each individual case. I've known people, for example, who begin by serving Christ, and only later do they come to discover their deep need of a Savior. The point is that these are the three irreducible elements in becoming a Christ-follower.

Wondering

- Why was the jailer going to kill himself?
- What part has your "household" played in your own coming to faith in Christ?
- How do the three things we must know to be saved operate in your life? How do you experience them?





Teaching

- As you lead your kids in discovering the *how* of salvation, it's important to reflect as much as possible on the spiritual condition of each one. Think about those who have been baptized, those who think of themselves as believers, and those who have serious questions or doubts about the faith.
- You may be wondering about the usefulness of talking about the *how* of salvation with young people who have never expressed the need to be saved. Isn't that putting the answer before the question? Whether or not the question of *how* is burning in their hearts, knowing the answer will serve them well as they mature and experience the ups and downs of life.

General Materials

Each session of *Dwell* includes specific materials you'll need for teaching it, such as printable pages or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you'll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies: Bibles, pencils or pens, whiteboard or newsprint, poster putty, markers, and the like, including a CD player or MP3 player.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activities	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Gathering for God's Story	7-10	Question Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> Dive magazines <input type="checkbox"/> A photograph of yourself, optional	
Entering the Story	5-7	Review Bible story	<input type="checkbox"/> Story symbols (printable page 56)	
Living into the Story	15-20	Story melodrama and discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Character nametags (printable page 58) <input type="checkbox"/> Skit script (printable page 57)	
Living Out of the Story	10-15	Blotting out sin Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> Dive magazines <input type="checkbox"/> Music, optional <input type="checkbox"/> Memory Challenge cards (printable page 53 or 54), one per person	

Step 1 Gathering for God's Story

Welcome your group. If you can, try to greet each person by name, introducing yourself to any who are new this week. Let them know you are glad to be with them again and that you're looking forward to spending this time together.

Pass out the Dive magazines and ask everyone turn to pages 10-11 as you ask the opening question for this session. (Don't be afraid to be a bit silly—have fun with this question!)

Tip

You may want to repeat some of what was said in week 1 about being the kind of group where people feel comfortable being themselves and safe sharing their thoughts (see p. 8).

If you could try out any hairstyle just for one day, what would you choose? (*Curly, straight, short, long, electric blue highlights, Mohawk, bald, etc.*)

After everyone has had the chance to answer, transition into the focus of today's session by describing the hairstyle you had when you came to know that you belong to God. If possible, bring a picture of yourself at that stage of life so your group can admire your slick sense of style, or laugh with you over your decades-old hairdo! Use the photo to briefly share how you discovered God's love in a real and personal way. Maybe you've always known God's love and presence in your life or maybe God used a specific event or person to draw you near. Tell what it was like for you to recognize your need for the forgiveness and belonging that Jesus offers.

Faith Modeling

When talking about your faith, it's always important to make it clear that you haven't "arrived" spiritually—that you're not perfect. Like everyone else, you are still learning and growing.

Wrap up by referring to the quote from the Heidelberg Catechism found on page 11 of the magazine. "[Jesus] also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven." Mention that this quote is from the longer version of Q&A 1 that your group talked about last week. The shorter version is found on page 8 of the magazine:

Q. What is your only comfort as a Christian?

A. That I, body and soul, in life and death, belong to Jesus Christ.

Close Step 1 by using this responsive reading found on page 9 of the magazine to pray together:

Leader: Powerful God, it's great to know that every "body and soul" detail of our lives is in your care.

Group: Even the hairs on our head!

Everyone: Thank you for loving us from head to toe, inside and out. Amen!



Tip

Ask one of the preteens in your group to sketch the symbols. Or make a copy of the week 1 and week 2 story symbols found on printable page 56. Cut them apart and attach each one to a colorful piece of cardstock. Then use poster putty to secure them to the wall after you show them to the group. If you do this week after week you'll create a growing collage of all the stories you've shared!

Step 2 Entering the Story

Either display the printable page of the story symbol from last week (prison bars with music notes coming through), or sketch it on your board or newsprint. As you draw, ask the group to recall why Paul and Silas were in prison and what gave them hope while they were there. Listen for their answers, and then draw or display the new symbol for this week's story: broken prison bars.

Hand out Bibles and ask everyone to look up Acts 16:25-40. Choose a few volunteers to read it out loud as the rest of you follow along silently.



Step 3 Living into the Story

Next, invite the group to dive into the action of the story by performing it together as a spontaneous melodrama.

A melodrama is a type of skit that uses exaggerated acting to emphasize the action and emotion in a story. It's hard to imagine a more exciting story than a miraculous earthquake jailbreak that led to the salvation of a whole family!

Pull out your copy of the skit script (printable page 57) and assign everyone a part in the skit by passing out the character nametags (printable page 58) along with a piece of tape. Choose the most outgoing youth who enjoy the spotlight to play the main characters. Ask everyone to attach the tag the front of their shirt, where everyone can see it. Let the group know that the “characters” may also include important objects in the story:

- Paul
- Silas
- Jailer
- Prisoner (optional)
- Jailhouse (optional)
- Jailer's family (optional)
- Earthquake (optional)

Clear a space in the room (or move to a larger room) so that everyone can stand and move around for this skit. Tell the young teens to listen for their cue and to act in ways that reflect the story as it is being read. Let them know that when their character has a line, they'll need to listen for it and then repeat their line with intense emotion and expression. Encourage “Paul” and “Silas” to belt out a song with gusto when singing is mentioned, and the “Jailer” to wail dramatically and fall to the ground with fear—it won't take long for your group to catch on!

You may want to practice by reading a few lines of the script and coaching your group. When everyone understands their role, read the story from the script slowly (but enthusiastically), emphasizing character's names (in caps) and the action words (in bold). Some small prompts from you may be necessary as the story progresses. Have fun as you narrate this “spontaneous skit”—the group will follow your lead, so break a leg!

When you're finished acting out the story, have everyone take their seats to talk about it together using some or all of these questions:

- **Between the earthquake and the jailbreak, this was a stressful night for the jailer! I wonder what was going through his mind when he woke up and realized that the jailhouse was open.**
- **Has God ever caught your attention in a surprising, unexpected, or scary situation? What was going through your mind at the time? Did you discover anything new about God or yourself?**
- **The jailer blurted out a big question, “What must I do to be saved?” What do you think he meant by that? What answer do you think he was hoping for?**
- **What questions do you wonder about God? What are you hoping to discover?**

Tip

Before this session, prepare the maximum number of nametags (from printable page 58) you think you will need. If you have a small group, discard non-essential characters like “earthquake” and “jailhouse.” If you have a large group, add additional family members, prisoners, or “jailhouses” and “earthquakes.”

Tip

Kids who are playing the “jailhouse” could simply raise their arms up and form a roof—let them be creative but be ready to encourage and give ideas if they need help.

Faith Modeling

This first question offers an opportunity for you to relate to the jailer's experience by telling a story about how a scary or unexpected event in your life brought to mind questions about God.

Be sure to affirm the questions that are offered, and include questions you wonder about as well.

- **If you were Paul or Silas, what would you have said in response to the jailer’s question?**

Tip

It’s important for young teens to have a place to grapple with questions of faith and the space to make discoveries and verbalize their faith. Everyone will naturally direct comments and questions to you. Instead of answering right away, draw the group into dialog by asking questions like, “Has anyone else thought about that?” and “What do the rest of you think?” Trust the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion in meaningful directions. Look for opportunities to follow up afterward with anyone who has more questions or who expresses an interest in knowing more about Jesus.

Step 4 Living Out of the Story

After the discussion, hand out pens or pencils and ask everyone to turn to pages 12-13 in their Dive magazines. Encourage one or two people to read the story summary at the top of page 12 that ends with the Q&A for today’s session.

Encourage the group to spend the next 5-8 minutes thinking individually about what this question means in their own lives by reading and filling out pages 12-13 in their magazines, writing their answers in the white space within each hand that appears on those pages.

Let everyone get up and spread out around the room, if they’d like. Assure them that no one else will read their answers, and they won’t have to share them with the group. Be sure to fill in your own answers too!

Consider playing some quiet music or turning the lights down to add to the reflective mood of this activity.

After about 5 minutes or when everyone seems to be finishing up, gather the group back together in a circle. Hold up a jar of whiteout and tell the group that you want them to experience the joy of forgiveness, which is part of salvation. Point out that salvation appears in the second part of today’s Q&A. Let them know that when we ask for forgiveness, God covers over our sins so that they can’t be seen or counted against us anymore. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we can have a fresh new start! That’s grace!

Open your Bible to Isaiah 43:25 and read out loud how God describes forgiveness in this passage: “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25).

Then silently open your own magazine to pages 12-13 and use the whiteout to cover over the words you’ve written in the fist next to the “Guilt” section, as the group watches. Pass the whiteout to the person next to you and encourage him or her to do the same, passing it along to the next person until everyone has had the chance to use it. Ask the group to consider this a sacred moment to spend in thought or prayer.

Consider saying this verse out loud (in full or in part) while each young person is blotting out the words on the paper. Include the person’s first name to personalize it. Or say it after everyone has had the chance to participate:

All of us fall short, all of us sin, all of us need to be made right with God. It’s Jesus who saves us from our sins. It’s Jesus who sets us free. [Name], receive God’s forgiveness. Receive God’s love. Receive God’s grace; it’s a free gift—with no strings attached (adapted from Romans 3:22-25a).

End this special time together by offering a heartfelt prayer of gratitude for the love, forgiveness, and salvation God offers us through Jesus Christ. Close the session by sharing this final thought from Scripture:

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:10-12).

Pass out the new Memory Challenge cards (from printable page 53 or 54) as everyone heads out the door.

Re★formed

Belief isn't just an intellectual exercise; it's a Spirit-initiated heart conviction that transforms the way we live! God is busy reclaiming and redeeming all of creation through Jesus Christ, and we get to be part of that as we show love to others and serve God with our lives.

Easy Extras

Here are some additional ideas you may choose to use along with or in place of the activities suggested for this session.

1. Early Arrival 👤 Aa 📖

Time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: Dive magazines, one per person

If some of your group arrives early, or if you have a little extra time, have your group open their magazines to page 9 and fill out their profiles. Share a few highlights together before moving into Step 1.

2. First-Person Tableaus Aa 👤

Option for Step 3: Living into the Story.

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: none

Instead of using the melodrama to help your group retell the story in Step 3, you could split into groups of two or three (or stay together as one group if you have three or fewer members) and ask each group to come up with three scenes that represent the experiences of one of the people in today's story (maybe the jailer, Paul, Silas, another prisoner, or one of the jailer's children). Encourage the groups to choose three moments that seem important and imitate the emotion and actions of that moment by freezing in a pose.

Give the groups about 5 minutes to work together before asking each pair or trio to retell the story through the three tableaus they've chosen. As each group shares, ask why they chose those moments in the story and what seems meaningful about them. Draw from some of the questions under Step 3 on pages 17-18 to help the groups think about ways they might relate to what the person in their scenes was experiencing.

3. Memory Challenge 👤 Aa 👤

Time: 3-5 minutes

Materials: Memory Challenge cards (printable page 53 or 54), one for each person

To incorporate the new Memory Challenge into today's session, print copies of the card for each person. Introduce the Scripture passage after your group reads the story at the end of Step 2. Use one of the Memory Challenge ideas on page 12 of the leader's guide (from session 1).

4. Serving Our “Thanks!”

Option for Step 4: Living Out of the Story.

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: board/newsprint, chalk/marker, and other supplies depending the service project your group decides on

This option will be helpful if you’re looking for an alternative for the whiteout portion of Step 4. Have your group reflect on guilt, grace, and gratitude in the Dive magazine just as it says in the beginning of Step 4, then use this step to help them express gratitude for the gift of salvation through Christ.

Brainstorm a way that your group can say thanks to God by showing love to others or caring for God’s creation. Tap into the passions of the youth in your group to plan a service project that everyone will get excited about. Use a board or newsprint to list everyone’s ideas, and then talk over the logistics of each (the drivers needed, schedules, adult supervision, supplies or expenses involved, and so on), until you find something that everyone agrees on.

Before you finalize the plans, be sure to review your church’s policies for child safety involving outings and events, and check in with the children’s ministry director, pastor, or a member of the church council to make sure you have permission to plan an offsite project. Then make the phone call to schedule the project for your group. Write a brief note describing what you’ll be doing, including relevant details like the time, date, location, what everyone needs to bring, leaders’ names, and contact information. Make copies and attach them to the slip your church uses for events that include children and youth. Pass out the notes and permission slips the following week and be clear about the date you’ll need permission slips returned.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Create care packages for relatives or church members who are away at college or in the military.
- Assign ingredients and get together to cook a meal for families staying at a local Ronald McDonald House. Or collect pop can tabs if a Ronald McDonald House near you offers that program. (Visit www.rmhc.org to find out more.)
- Help keep a local street or park clean by “adopting” it and collecting garbage together a few times throughout the year. Your town may even have a community program that offers grants for groups who participate in road cleanup projects.
- If your church is part of a denomination, visit the denomination’s website for other service project ideas.

Close the session with a heartfelt prayer of gratitude for the salvation that God offers each of you through Jesus Christ and the comfort of knowing that you belong to God. Pass out the new Memory Challenge cards (from printable page 53 or 54) as everyone heads out the door.

DIVE

Dear Family,

This year our group will experience the true story of God’s love shaping our lives! It can be hard to hear the Good Shepherd’s voice over the buzz of screens, smart phones, and social media; that’s why our time together is so precious. Each week we’ll hit the “pause” button in our busy lives so we can dive into God’s story and listen, imagine, wonder, create, discover, and grow!

For the next six weeks we’ll be exploring what it means to belong to Jesus and reflecting on our need for a Savior. We will dive into these stories, pairing them with important teachings from the Reformed/Presbyterian confessions:

Week 1: Acts 16:16-25. Belonging to Jesus (Paul and Silas in Prison)



Week 2: Acts 16:25-40. What We Need to Know (Earthquake, Jailbreak, and the Jailer’s Conversion)



Week 3: Genesis 4:1-16. In Need of Forgiveness (Cain Kills Abel)



Week 4: Genesis 3. The Way We Are (Adam and Eve Sin)



Week 5: Genesis 6-9. Our Just and Loving God (Noah and the Flood)



Week 6: Luke 1:76-77. Jesus, Our Savior (John Prepares the Way for Jesus and Baptizes Him)



Pass it On

Here are two ideas for talking about faith with your young teen:

- Pull out some old photos of yourself as a child, teen, or young adult and have fun together laughing at your hairstyles and clothes. Talk about how old you were when you came to know in your heart that you belong to God. What was that like for you?
- Young teens have turbulent lives! The next time a crisis erupts, take a minute to share how your relationship with Jesus has given you comfort during a difficult time.

If talking about faith doesn’t come naturally to you, start small. Even a brief conversation can leave a lasting impression!

Sincerely,

P.S. Check out www.NurtureKidsFaith.org for more faith-building ideas for home!

Memory Challenge Cards (NIV)

Session 1 Memory Challenge

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

—Romans 14:8, NIV

Session 2 Memory Challenge

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

—Acts 16:31a, NIV

Session 3 Memory Challenge

Jesus replied: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

—Matthew 22:37-39, NIV

Session 4 Memory Challenge

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

—Romans 14:8, NIV

Session 5 Memory Challenge

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9, NIV

Session 6 Memory Challenge

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

—John 3:16, NIV

Memory Challenge Cards (NRSV)

Session 1 Memory Challenge

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

—Romans 14:8, NRSV

Session 2 Memory Challenge

“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

—Acts 16:31a, NRSV

Session 3 Memory Challenge

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

—Matthew 22:37-39, NRSV

Session 4 Memory Challenge

If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

—Romans 14:8, NRSV

Session 5 Memory Challenge

If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9, NRSV

Session 6 Memory Challenge

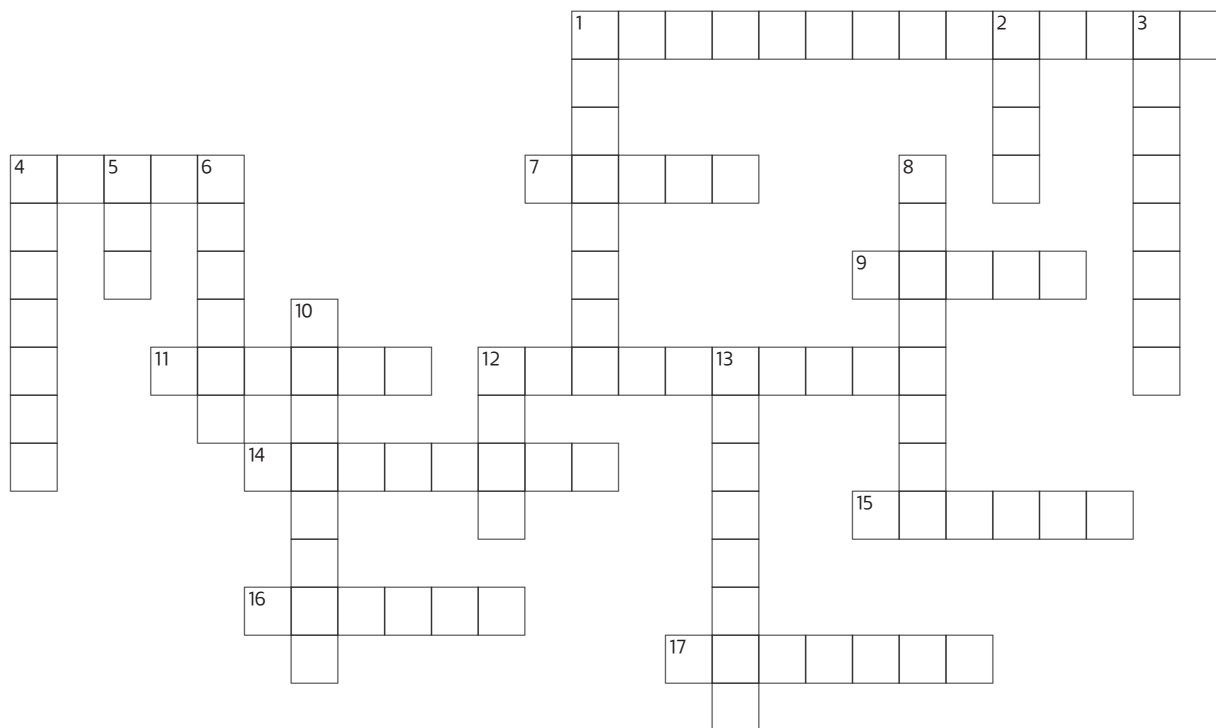
“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

—John 3:16, NRSV

Prisoners of the Bible

The answers to this cross-word puzzle are all prisoners or captives mentioned in the Bible. Look up each Scripture passage and write the name of the prisoner mentioned in it.

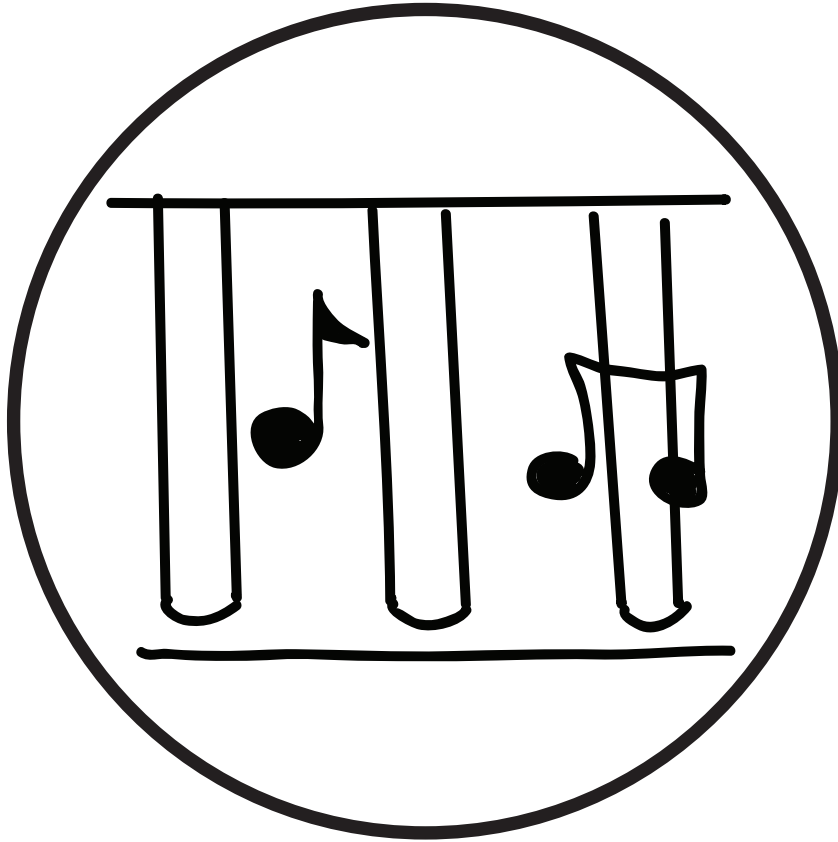
- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Mark 6 | 1. Jeremiah 37 |
| 4. Acts 16 | 2. Acts 16 |
| 7. Acts 4 | 3. Daniel 1 |
| 9. Matthew 26 | 4. Acts 6 |
| 11. Genesis 37 | 5. Genesis 14 |
| 12. 2 Kings 24 | 6. Judges 16 |
| 14. 2 Kings 23 | 8. Daniel 1 |
| 15. 2 Kings 17 | 10. 2 Kings 25 |
| 16. Daniel 1 | 12. Acts 4 |
| 17. Daniel 1 | 13. Acts 5 |



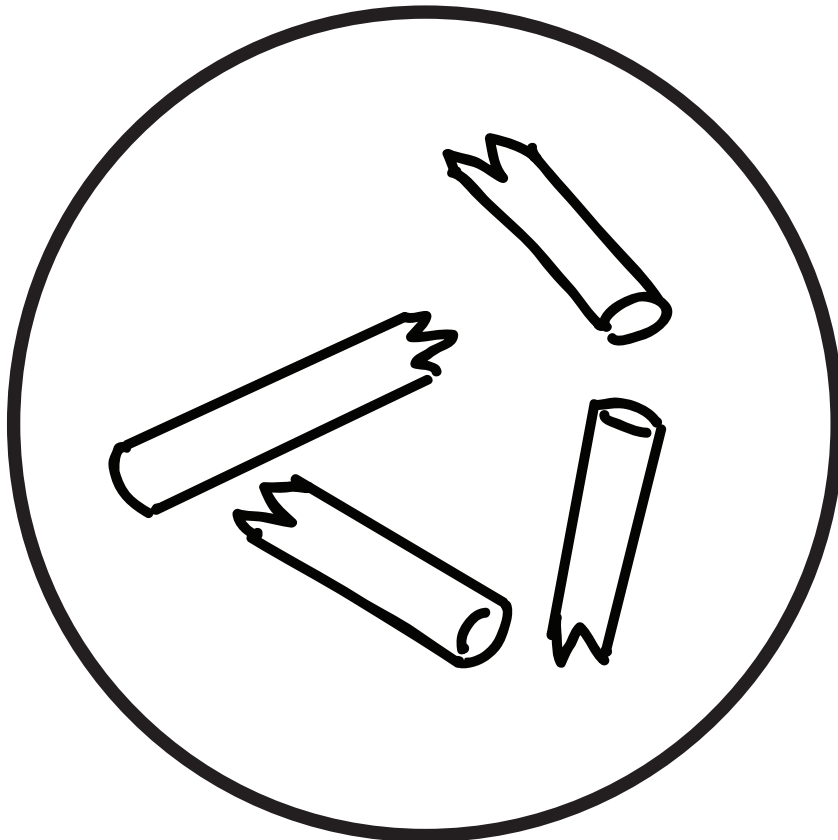
The Persecuted Church Today

Like Paul and Silas from today’s story, many Christians around the world are imprisoned or in danger because they believe in Jesus and want to tell others about his love. You can help by praying that they will be strong and courageous as they share God’s love, and that Jesus will protect them and fill them with peace. Visit www.idop.org and look under “Resources” to download a prayer map that will help you pray for Christians in specific countries around the world.

Pray also for those who don’t yet know Christ—that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of teens, preteens, kids, and adults so that they can come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.



Year 1, Unit 1, Session 1



Year 1, Unit 1, Session 2

Spontaneous Skit of Acts 16:25-34

(adapted from *The Message*)

Our scene takes place in the middle of the night.

PAUL and SILAS **were locked up** in a JAILHOUSE.

Even though all the other PRISONERS were **trying to sleep**, PAUL and SILAS were **wide awake, praying, and singing** songs to God.

Then, without warning, came a huge EARTHQUAKE! The whole JAILHOUSE shook and almost fell down! The doors to the JAILHOUSE **flew open** and the PRISONERS **ran around loose**.

The JAILER was lying outside on the ground, **sleeping and snoring**—but when he heard the sound of the EARTHQUAKE, he **leapt to his feet and looked around frantically**.

When he saw that the JAILHOUSE doors were wide open, he **groaned** with despair.

The JAILER pulled out his sword from the sheath at his side and, figuring he was as good as dead anyway, was about to do himself in.

Sudden, he **heard** a voice. It was PAUL, trying to **stop** him.

PAUL **said, “Don’t do that!** *(Pause for actor to repeat.)*

We’re all still here! *(Pause.)*

Nobody’s run away!” *(Pause.)*

The JAILER **got a torch and ran inside. Badly shaken**, the JAILER **collapsed** in front of PAUL and SILAS.

The JAILER **led PAUL AND SILAS out of the jail and asked, “Sirs,** *(pause for actor to repeat)* **what must I do to be saved, to really live?”** *(Pause.)*

PAUL and SILAS **said together, “Put your entire trust in the Master, Jesus.** *(Pause for actors to repeat.)* **Then you’ll live as you were meant to live—and everyone in your household included!”** *(Pause.)*

They went on to spell out in detail the story of the Master—the **entire family** heard the story and believed. The JAILER and his **entire family** had put their trust in God; **everyone in the house** was in on the **celebration**.

(End the skit in celebration—encourage the group to clap, whistle, and cheer!)

Story Character Nametags

Paul	Silas
Jailer	Prisoner
Prisoner	<i>Earthquake</i>
<i>Earthquake</i>	Jailhouse
Jailhouse	Jailer's family
Jailer's family	



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Year 1

Unit 1 What Do I Do When Things Fall Apart?

Unit 2 What's the Covenant All About?

Unit 3 Who Is God?

Unit 4 Who Is Jesus?

Unit 5 Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Unit 6 What Is the Church?

Year 2

Unit 1 What Is Being a Christian All About?

Unit 2 What's with All the Rules?

Unit 3 Can't We All Just Get Along?

Unit 4 Who's Number 1?

Unit 5 Does What I Do Make a Difference?

Unit 6 What Do I Say When I Pray?


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ISBN 978-1-59255-648-9



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