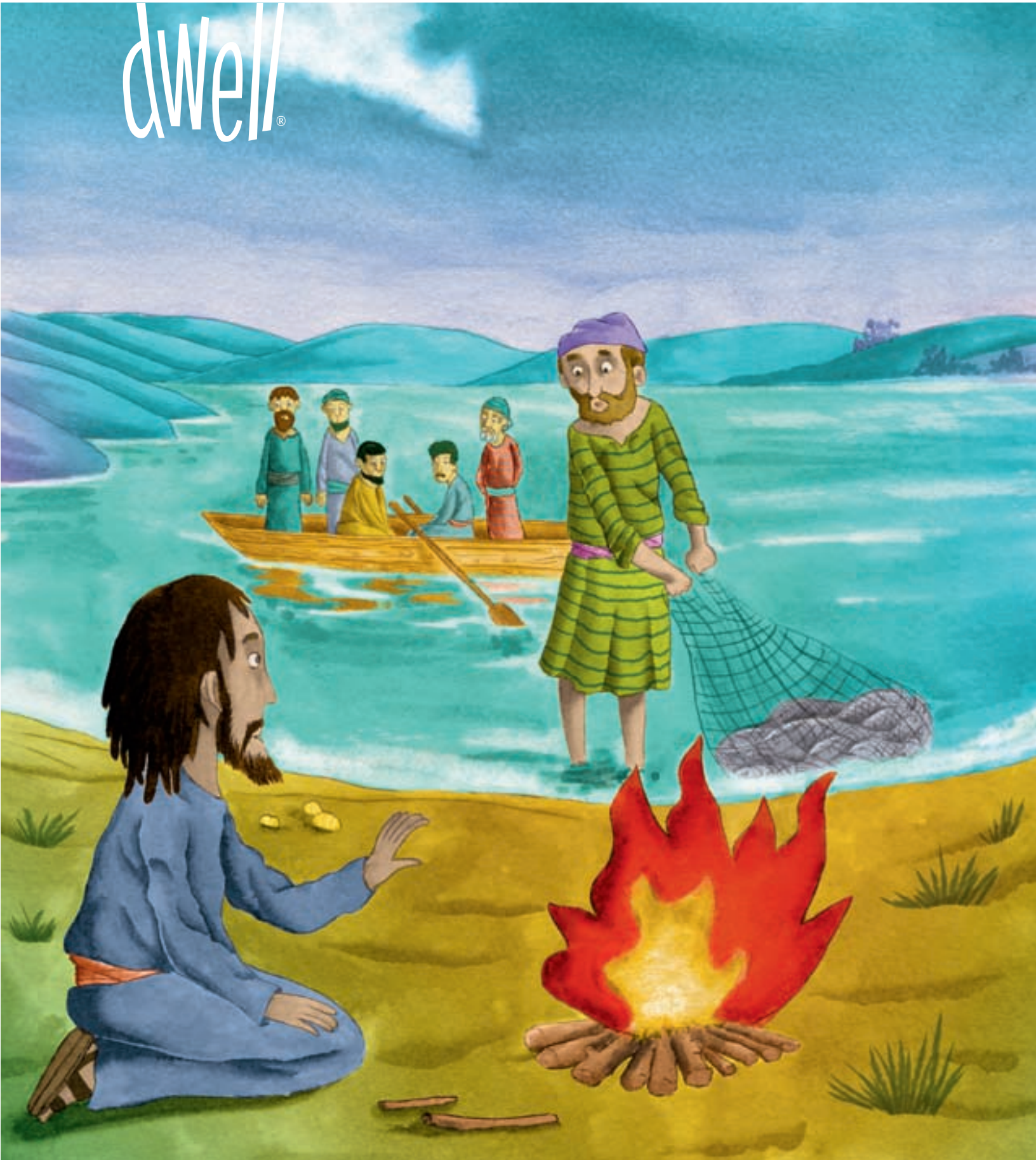



dwell<sup>®</sup>



Dear Family,

During the next several weeks we're going to be talking about the early church and how it spread into the whole earth. These are exciting stories, filled with the Spirit's power. We hope you take time to read them and wonder about them as a family. Your set of God's Big Story cards will help you do that together.

Here is a glance at the upcoming sessions with suggested questions to ask your child each week:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Easter: Jesus Is Alive 

What did the eyewitnesses say about Jesus? What difference does that make for us?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session 1: Saul's Conversion 

What do you imagine the Christians in Jerusalem said to each other when they heard what happened to Saul?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session 2: The Send-off 

Wonder together about what happened to the magician Elymas after the story recorded in the Scripture.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session 3: Lystra 

Why do you suppose the people at Lystra at first thought Paul and Barnabas were gods? What types of people do we tend to "worship" in our culture?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session 4: The Council at Jerusalem 

Identify a missionary from your church to support and pray for as a family. What will you do? How often?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session 5: A Stop at Philippi 

What can we learn from Paul's response to the jailer's question? Is what Paul suggested easy or hard to do? Why?

## Memory Challenge

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

—Matthew 28:1-7, NIV

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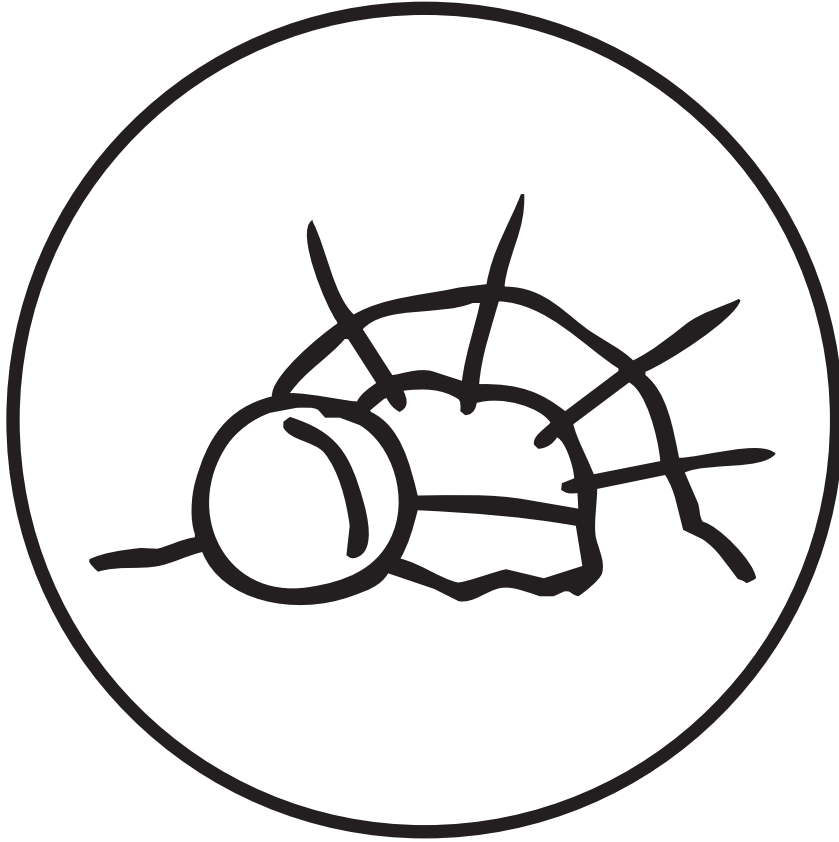
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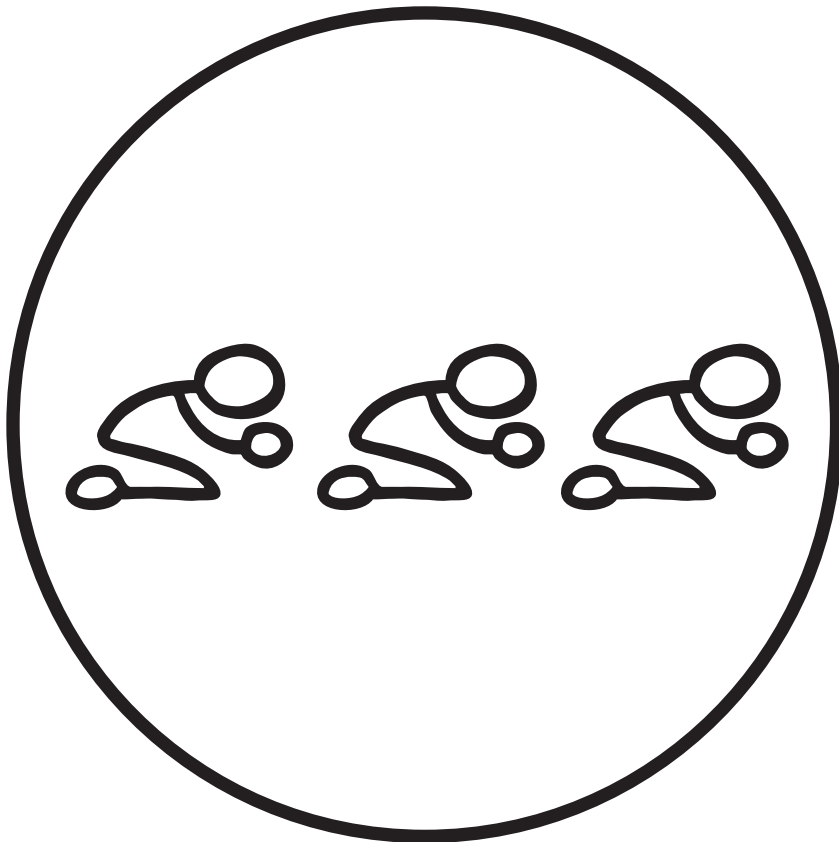
Year 1, Unit 5,  
Easter Session



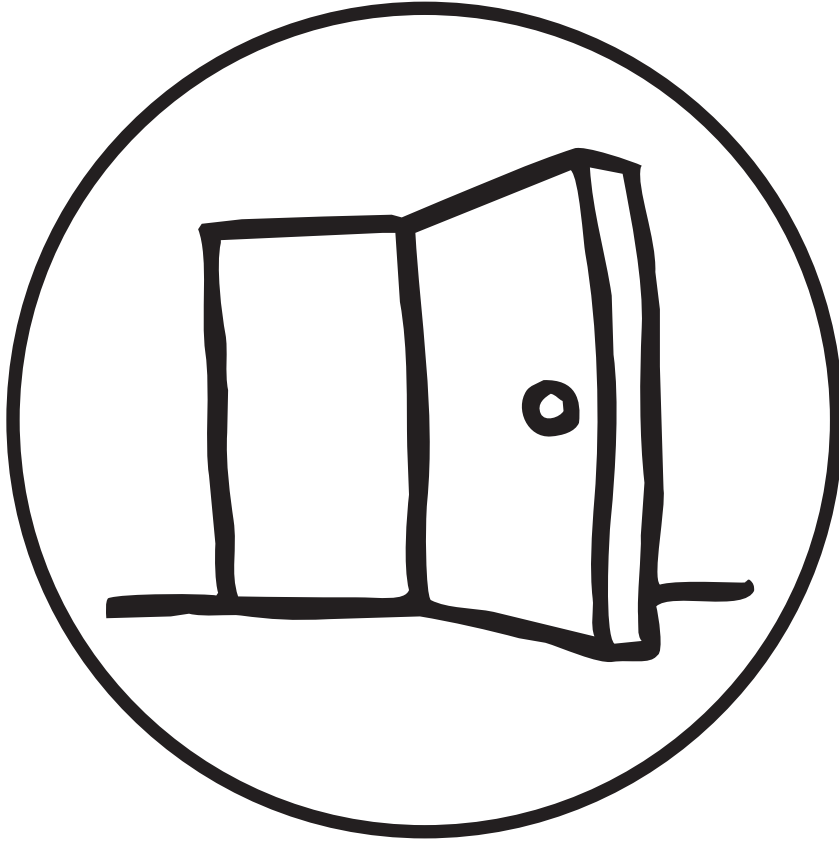
Year 1, Unit 5, Session 1



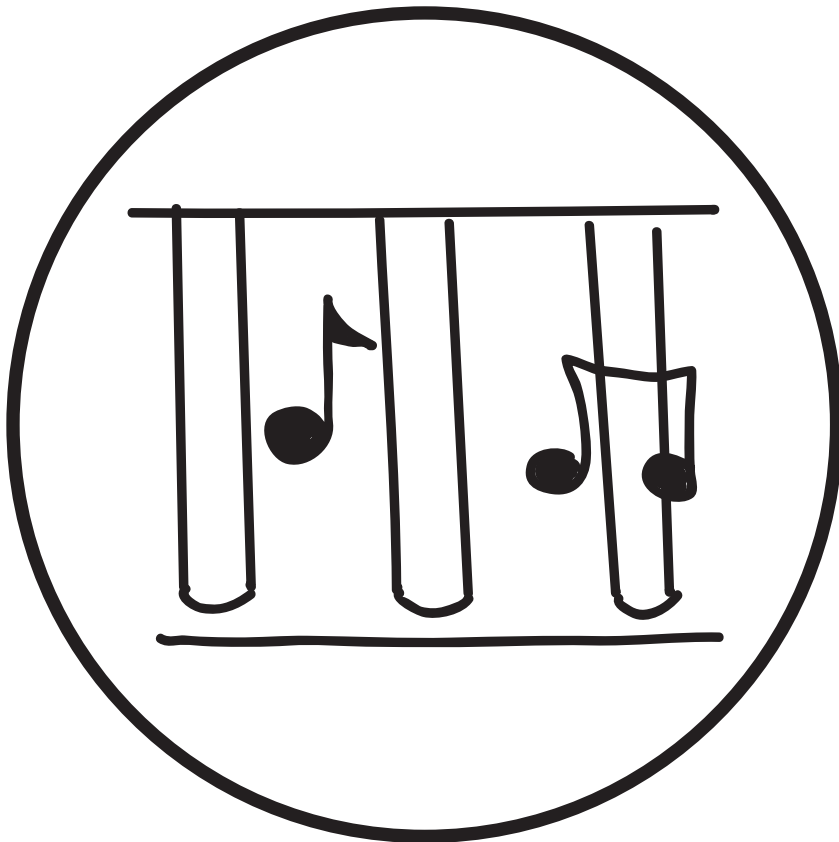
Year 1, Unit 5, Session 2



Year 1, Unit 5, Session 3



Year 1, Unit 4, Session 4



Year 1, Unit 4, Session 5

# He Is Risen

## A Reader's Theater Based on *The Message*, Matthew 28:1-9

**Narrator 1:** After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb.

**Narrator 2:** Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing.

**Narrator 1:** He rolled back the stone and then sat on it.

**Narrator 2:** Shafts of lightning blazed from him.

**Narrator 1:** His garments shimmered snow-white.

**Narrator 2:** The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.

**Narrator 1:** The angel spoke to the women:

**Angel:** There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed. Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, "He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there." That's the message.

**Narrator 2:** The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples.

**Narrator 1:** Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks.

**Jesus:** Good morning!

**Narrator 2:** The women fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him.

**Jesus:** You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there.



## Eyewitness Team 1

Read the story of Jesus' appearance to Cleopas and his friend in Luke 24:13-32. Then choose one of the following ways to retell the story to the group:

- Prepare a radio or TV interview of the two friends who met Jesus on the road. Assign one person to be the reporter and the other two to be the friends. Decide what questions the reporter will ask the friends and how they will respond.
- Prepare to act out the story for the group. You will need Jesus and two friends. If there are only two of you, one person can pretend to be both friends!
- Draw a picture (or pictures) of your story and prepare to tell the story to the group with the visual(s).

## Eyewitness Team 2

Read the story of Jesus' appearance in the upper room in John 20:19-24. Then choose one of the following ways to retell the story to the group:

- Prepare a radio or TV interview of one or more of the disciples. Assign one person to be the reporter and the other, disciples. Decide what questions the reporter will ask the disciples and how they will respond.
- Prepare to act out the story for the group. You will need Jesus and one or more disciples. If there are only two of you, one person can pretend to be all the disciples!
- Draw a picture (or pictures) of your story and prepare to tell the story to the group with the visual(s).

## Eyewitness Team 3

Read the story of Jesus' appearance on the beach in John 21:1-14. Then choose one of the following ways to retell the story to the group:

- Prepare a radio or TV interview of Peter and/or other disciples. Assign one person to be the reporter and the other, disciples. Decide what questions the reporter will ask the disciples and how they will respond.
- Prepare to act out the story for the group. You will need Jesus and at least one disciple!
- Draw a picture (or pictures) of your story and prepare to tell the story to the group with the visual(s).

## Eyewitness Team 4

Read the story of Jesus' ascension in Acts 1:3-9. Then choose one of the following ways to retell the story to the group:

- Prepare a radio or TV interview of the disciples who witnessed Jesus rising into heaven. Assign one person to be the reporter and the other two to be the friends. Decide what questions the reporter will ask the disciples and how they will respond.
- Prepare to act out the story for the group. You will need Jesus and at least one disciple.
- Draw a picture (or pictures) of your story and prepare to tell the story to the group with the visual(s).

# Saul's Story

Hello, my name is Saul. Just between you and me, I don't have the greatest reputation around Jerusalem. In fact, most Christians run and hide at the mention of my name . . . but I'm hoping that's going to change.

You see, I've been changed, completely changed. I used to try to persecute Christians—but now I too serve Jesus! This is how it happened. . . .

I had just received letters from the high priest to the synagogues—places of worship—in Damascus. These letters gave me permission to arrest any people who claimed to be followers of Jesus and to take them to prison in Jerusalem. I couldn't wait to get there! I hated those Christians and all their talk about “the Way” so much! What they said seemed very wrong to me. I was convinced that anyone who believed in Jesus was betraying the Jewish religion and turning away from God, so they deserved to be punished.

As I traveled to Damascus, something awesome and totally frightening happened. A dazzling light from heaven suddenly flashed all around me. The light was so intense that I thought the sun had fallen from the sky! Terrified, I fell to the ground—sure I was about to die! Then I heard a voice speak:

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” I asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” the voice said. “Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Later, the men who were traveling with me said they were terrified too. They heard a sound, but they didn't know where it was coming from. The light was so bright that they needed to cover their eyes.

When the light was gone, I shakily pulled myself to my feet. But when I opened my eyes I couldn't see a thing! Everything was dark. “Help,” I cried to my companions. “I can't see anything.” Although they were still afraid, they took my hands and led me to Damascus—the very place I had planned to go and persecute the Christians.

I was in shock. That's when I knew for sure that Jesus is real—and that he spoke to *me*! I was so ashamed of myself for persecuting the servants of Jesus, the One who talked to me. How could I have been so blind? For

three days I sat in darkness. I couldn't bring myself to eat or drink anything. I spent a lot of time praying, asking Jesus to forgive me.

Meanwhile, God spoke to a disciple in Damascus—a man named Ananias. You might think that God told Ananias to go punish me for the thing I had done. But that's not what happened. Instead God told Ananias to go to the house where I was staying and lay his hands on me, with God's power, to restore my sight. Instead of punishing me, God was going to make me well!

Later I learned that Ananias was afraid to come anywhere near me. He had heard the stories. He knew that I had been persecuting the followers of Jesus. But God told him to go anyway. And here's the amazing thing: God told Ananias he had chosen me to become his missionary! He had chosen me to tell others about him. Me, of all people!

So Ananias bravely came to the house I was staying in and laid his hands on me. He said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Immediately, something like scales fell from my eyes, and I could see again! Best of all, I could live again—in a new way!

I was baptized, and I began to preach in the synagogues. I told everyone I met that Jesus is the Son of God. Many people were astonished at my words. They couldn't believe that I, Saul of Tarsus, who had first come to take Christians as prisoners, now was loudly proclaiming that Jesus is alive. Everyone was amazed at the change that had taken place within me.

Some of the Jews in the city, people who had been my friends and partners in persecuting Christians, didn't like this change one bit. They tried to kill me. But the Christians kept me safe. They helped me escape Damascus in the middle of the night by lowering me in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

Now I travel from place to place telling everyone I meet about the good news of Jesus. I still can't believe that Jesus chose me, of all people, to be a missionary for him. Once I was an enemy of Jesus, but now he calls me his friend. Once I was blind, but now I see!

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It's your mission to say hi to each person in the room.

---

It's your mission to tell someone your birth date  
and where you were born.

---

It's your mission to hop from one end of the room to another.

---

It's your mission to count to ten out loud five times.

---

It's your mission to write the names of five states  
or provinces on the board.

---

It's your mission to smile at everyone in the room.

---

It's your mission to say the ABCs out loud.

---

It's your mission to sing a song—any song you like.

---

It's your mission to walk backwards across the room.

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# Story Script: The Blind Magician

The church in Antioch was a special church. It was made up of CHRISTIANS of many different kinds. Even its leaders were different—they were from many different cultures and races. (*Encourage Christians in Antioch to hold hands in a circle or raise hands in praise.*)

One day while the CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH were **worshipping and praying**, the Holy Spirit spoke to them and said, “I have chosen PAUL and BARNABAS for special work.”

The CHRISTIANS in ANTIOCH **gathered around** PAUL and BARNABAS. **They laid their hands on** PAUL and BARNABAS and **prayed for God’s blessing** on their new task.

Then PAUL and BARNABAS **set off on a journey together**—to tell everyone they met about Jesus.

They **sailed** first to the island of Cyprus. They **walked from one end of the island to the other**, telling people the good news. **“Jesus loves you,”** they said. **“Jesus died for you.”** (*Pause and invite actors to repeat these words.*)

One day PAUL and BARNABAS **came to the city of Paphos**, where the local Roman ruler, SERGIUS PAULUS, lived. SERGIUS was **very curious** about what PAUL AND BARNABAS were teaching, so he asked his servants to **go and find them and bring them to visit him**.

But there was a man named ELYMAS who didn’t want SERGIUS PAULUS to listen to PAUL and BARNABAS. **He was worried**. He knew that if SERGIUS PAULUS listened to Paul, he’d be out of a job!

ELYMAS was a magician and false prophet. He made his living by **doing tricks and making up lies**. More than anything else, he wanted SERGIUS to listen only to him, to believe his lies.

So when PAUL and BARNABAS **came to visit** SERGIUS PAULUS, ELYMUS was **angry and jealous**. He **sneered and mocked** them. (*Pause and invite the actor to do so.*)

When PAUL started talking about Jesus, ELYMAS shouted, **“Don’t believe these men! They’re not telling the truth!”** (*Pause and invite the actor to repeat.*)

PAUL, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at ELYMAS and said, **“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right!”** (*Pause and invite the actor to repeat.*)

He continued, **“You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you ever stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”** (*Pause and invite the actor to repeat.*)

Then he said, **“Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not able to even see the light of the sun.”** (*Pause and invite the actor to repeat.*)

Suddenly a mist and darkness surrounded ELYMAS, and he became blind.

He **cried out in fear and stumbled around, reaching out his hands in search of someone** to lead him by the hand.

When SERGIUS **saw what happened** to ELYMAS, he was **amazed**. **“I believe in Jesus,”** he said. (*Pause and invite the actor to repeat.*)

So PAUL and BARNABAS **continued on their way**.

**ANTIOCH  
CHRISTIANS**

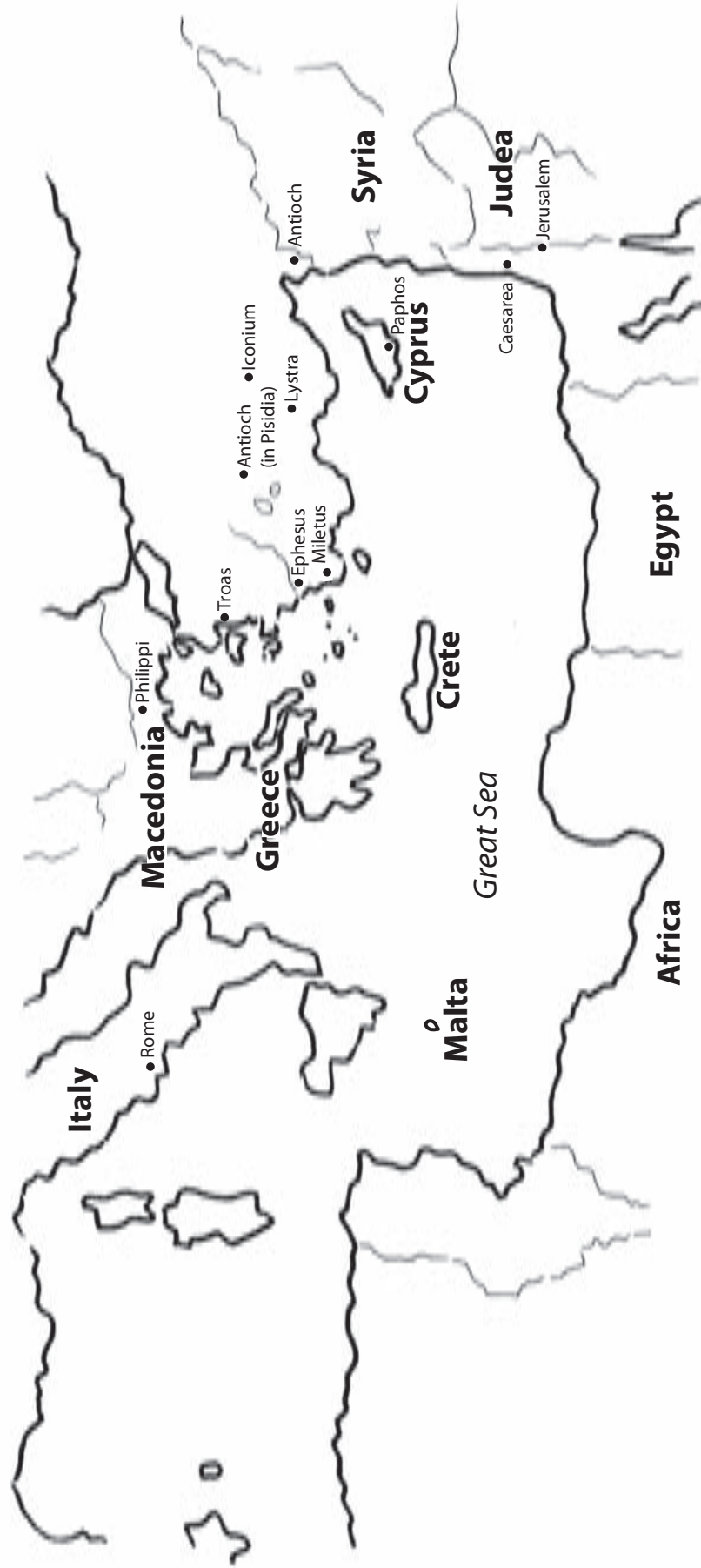
**PAUL**

**BARNABAS**

**SERGIUS  
PAULUS**

**ELYMAS**

# Paul's Missionary Journeys



# Trouble in Lystra

Beloved Church Brothers and Sisters:

I pray all is well in Antioch. Barnabas and I (Paul) are doing well. I'm writing to encourage you to keep praying for us and to keep living good lives before our Father in heaven. Some of us will have to go through many hardships and face many difficulties as we continue to speak about our Savior Jesus, but don't lose heart! Barnabas and I just left the city of Lystra, where we faced an angry crowd of people who tried to kill me.

Here's what happened. When we first arrived in Lystra, I spoke openly about Jesus to many people in the city square. On the edge of the crowd I noticed a man who had been lame from birth; he had never walked. I could tell that he believed the things I was telling the crowd. Then the power of the Holy Spirit moved me to call out to him and say "Stand up!" Immediately the man jumped to his feet and began to walk.

Others in the crowd saw what God had done through me and started shouting something in their own language. Barnabas and I wondered what they could be saying. They pointed at me and shouted "Hermes! Hermes!" Others pointed to Barnabas, crying out "Zeus!" Before we understood what was going on, the priest of their god Zeus brought bulls and wreaths to us. They thought that we were their gods in human form, and they wanted to make sacrifices to us!

When Barnabas and I finally understood what was happening, we tore our clothes in despair and rushed to the crowd. Speaking to them in Greek, I said, "Friends, why are you doing this? We are only human like you. We bring you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them." I told them that God shows them kindness by sending them rain from heaven to provide crops and food for them. Even after I shared all of this, they kept trying to make sacrifices to us.

Later on, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and stirred these very same people against us. They said all kinds of untrue things about us that made the crowd very angry. Then the very same people who first thought Barnabas and I were gods picked up heavy stones and began to throw them at me! The shouts of the crowd drowned out my attempts to speak the truth to them. Each stone struck my body with such force that I eventually fainted. Later Barnabas told me that they thought I was dead and dragged me out of the city. After a while I regained consciousness, though my body hurt all over. Barnabas and other disciples helped me get up and go back into the city. The next day we left for the city of Derbe.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, please do not stop praying for us. We will continue to preach the good news of Jesus everywhere we go, even if we face opposition. Continue to fight the good fight of faith until we meet again.

Yours truly,

Paul of Tarsus

# I Was There

Choose one of the activities below to retell the story of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra:

## News Conference

Plan a news conference with a reporter interviewing Paul about his experiences in Lystra. You can use the questions from the interview in the Storymark or come up with your own. Choose two members of your group to act out the new conference for the larger group.

## Act It Out

Plan a skit of the events in the story. You could have one person play each of the following roles:

- Paul and Barnabas
- Mob
- Man who was lame

## Draw It

Draw a picture of what happened in Lystra that day from the point of view of the man who was healed. What did he see? Prepare to tell the group about your picture.

## Tell It

Retell the story from the point of view of the man who couldn't walk. Answer these questions:

- What did he hear about Paul and Barnabas?
- What was he thinking as he approached them?
- Did he expect them to actually heal them?
- What did he think after the healing?
- How did this day change his life?



# Courageous Kids Situation Cards

Darcy is working on a school project with Ashley and Jessica. Jessica tells Ashley that she can't stand Christians. Darcy loves Jesus and wants to talk to Jessica about her comment. What should Darcy say?

Yolanda attends a public school in her neighborhood. One day, her teacher tells the class that Jesus was a good person who lived on earth, but he never rose from the tomb. Yolanda wants her teacher to know the truth about Jesus. What should she do?

Malik and his family have just moved onto Jason's street. Jason and Malik become friends. Jason soon discovers that his new friend attends a local mosque with his family. Jason really wants to invite Malik to his church. What should he say?

Dominique and Shaina are at Leah's house for a slumber party. Shaina and Leah want to watch a movie that is not appropriate for kids. Dominique says she does not want to watch the movie because she is a Christian. Leah and Shaina laugh and mock her for being a "saint." What should Dominique do?

Juan and Tim play soccer together on the weekends. Juan tells Tim about an Easter celebration he is going to at his church. Tim frowns and says "I would never go to church." What should Juan say to Tim?

Ryan is driving home with his baseball team from a big game. Ryan's friend Michael tells him that he doesn't believe in God. What should Ryan say to Michael?

# The Council at Jerusalem

Paul looked around at the familiar faces of his dear church friends in Antioch. He and Barnabas had just returned to Antioch from their adventurous missionary journey to the island of Cyprus and the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. It was a dramatic journey of sailing the Great Sea and trudging across rocky deserts, hills, and valleys. (*Pretend to be sailing and trudging.*)

They were exhausted, to say the least. (*Look exhausted.*)

But they were eager to keep telling the good news. In Antioch they began teaching all the people—Jews and Gentiles alike. (*Pretend to talk and gesture.*)

Some of the Jews in Antioch were angry about that. They thought no one could be truly saved unless they followed the Jewish laws given by Moses. When Paul heard this, he was furious. He couldn't help but think of the Gentiles he'd befriended on his recent missionary journeys. What would they think of such a message? What if they began to doubt their faith in Jesus? He and Barnabas confronted these teachers at once. "We are saved through faith in Jesus alone!" he boldly declared. (*Demonstrate the reactions of Paul and Barnabas.*)

"Please go to the leaders of the church at Jerusalem," the Gentile Christians told Paul and Barnabas. "They can decide if we Gentiles really have to obey the whole Jewish law about what to eat and what do on the Sabbath if we want to be saved." And so the whole congregation sadly waved goodbye to Paul and Barnabas. (*Wave goodbye with sad faces.*)

So Paul and Barnabas began the long trip to Jerusalem. (*Walk in place.*)

On the way, they stopped at places where there were churches. They kept telling the believers that the Gentiles were becoming Christians. Most of the believers were very happy and celebrated. (*Smile and celebrate.*)

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were warmly welcomed. Everyone listened eagerly to their stories about how the Gentiles were becoming followers of Christ. (*Offer handshakes and smiles, put hands behind ears to show listening.*)

But some in the crowd jumped to their feet and shouted that those Gentiles had to follow all the Jewish laws and customs. (*Jump up and down, shake fists.*)

"This is exactly what we want to talk about," Paul and Barnabas said. So the leaders decided to have a big meeting. (*Huddle and pretend to talk.*)

At the big meeting one side said, "Yes! The Gentiles must do exactly what we Jews do if they want to be followers of Christ." (*Nod vigorously.*)

"No way!" the other side said. "Why should Gentiles have to obey all the Jewish rules?" (*Shake head no.*)

Then Peter got up and held his hand up for silence. (*Hold up hand.*)

"Listen to me," said Peter. "God gave the Holy Spirit to Gentiles just the same as us, right? Don't you believe that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by Jesus in the same way—by grace?" People nodded their heads. (*Nod yes.*)

Then Paul and Barnabas got up and told about the mighty miracle God had done through them among the Gentiles. Everyone listened in amazement. It was so quiet you could have heard your heart beating. (*Hands to lips.*)

Then James, another leader, got up. "We should certainly not ask Gentile believers to obey all our Jewish rules," said James. "Of course, there are just a few things they should not do, like eat meat sacrificed to idols. But let's not make it hard for people to become followers of Jesus. That's not right! Heads everywhere nodded in agreement. (*Nod.*)

So that's what the people in the church in Jerusalem decided to tell the Gentile Christians in Antioch. They wrote a letter and asked Paul and Barnabas to deliver it. Then the whole congregation in Jerusalem said goodbye to Paul and Barnabas. (*Wave goodbye.*)

The men traveled as quickly as they could to Antioch. (*Walk rapidly in place.*)

When they arrived, they held a big meeting with all the Christians in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas read the letter from the church in Jerusalem. (*Hold up an imaginary letter and pretend to read it.*)

How do you think the Gentiles in Antioch felt when they heard that they did not have to obey all the Jewish laws in order to be Christians? (*Demonstrate.*)

Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for a while, preaching and teaching the Word of God to the people. They were glad that Jesus welcomed all people everywhere—Jews and Gentiles—to be his followers.

# The Council Says . . .

**Reporter:** So what happened there? Was it a peaceful meeting? Or were there some strong arguments and disagreements?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** I hear Paul and Barnabas were there—all the way from Antioch. What did they tell the group?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** Did Peter and James have anything to say?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** Did they decide that everyone who wants to be a Christian has to follow all the Jewish laws?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** Wow—didn't that make some people angry?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** What happens now? How will you let the churches know about your decision?

**Delegate:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reporter:** Well, thanks for your time. Sounds like you did some important work here in Jerusalem! I guess that means the church will keep growing and growing.

# Open Arms

Read the following situations and discuss ways you can welcome and include these kids.

Jose is watching a group of kids play four-square on the playground.

Every day Taylor wears old sneakers with holes in the toes. All her clothes are hand-me-downs. Sometimes they don't even fit.

Jalen is the new kid in your class. He is black. Almost all the other kids are white.

Vladimir just moved next door. He is from Russia. Even though he speaks English, it's a little hard to understand what he is saying. He is very shy.

Emily wants to play soccer—all the other team members are boys.

Jack's next-door neighbor and best friend moved away. Now he rides the bus to school all by himself.

# A Stop at Philippi

## Meet Lydia

Want to buy some lovely purple cloth? I sell only the finest, dyed to a deep crimson. I tell you, this cloth is fit for kings and queens to wear! I can give you a good price, and an honest one. I will not cheat you, for I am a follower of the one true God.

No, I am not a Jew. I am a Greek businesswoman. The Jews would call me a Gentile. There are very few Jews in Philippi, the city where I live—only a handful. Each Sabbath they meet down by the river outside the city to worship God.

I join them because I too worship the true God—even though I am a Gentile. And now I know even more about God. I know about God’s only Son, Jesus. I know because of a man called Paul who met us down at the river.

Paul and some other men joined us in our Sabbath worship a few weeks ago. The Jews invited Paul to speak since he was well-trained in the Scriptures. Expecting him to speak about the Law of Moses, we sat down on the grass to listen. But Paul had an entirely new message. He told us about a Savior, Jesus, who was God’s own Son. This was something none of us had ever heard before. Imagine how excited we were!

Paul said that this Jesus was born as a human baby, and that he grew up and taught the Jewish people about the kingdom of God. Paul also said that Jesus was killed on a cross and then rose again to life. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again for our sins, said Paul, God will give us eternal life.

At first many of the Jews did not believe Paul. But something opened my heart. For some reason, I just knew the message was true—and I wanted to hear more! “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” I urged Paul and the others, “come stay at my house.” The men agreed, and they came to my house to share the news about Jesus with everyone in my family. We all believed. I praise God for allowing these men to stay at my house. Now my entire household knows the amazing truth about Jesus!

## Meet a Slave Girl

“Want to have your fortune told? I can tell you what’s going to happen to you—this year, next year, and in ten years. I can see into the future. I will tell you what your future is if you give my masters a hundred dollars.”

That’s what I used to tell people when I had an evil spirit inside of me. In fact, that’s why my masters bought me and made me their slave. They recognized that an evil spirit of Satan inside me could tell the future.

I made my masters very rich by telling people’s fortunes. I mean, everyone wants to know what’s going to happen to them, don’t they? Wouldn’t you pay a hundred dollars to find out?

One day as I was walking in the street behind my masters, I saw a group of people going toward the city gate, headed for the river. I noticed two men in particular who seemed to be leading the group.

Suddenly the evil spirit inside of me said, “Follow those two!” So I did. I always did what that spirit told me. The evil spirit told me to shout, as loud as I could, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” I didn’t know what this meant. I just shouted out whatever the evil spirit told me to say. I couldn’t stop doing this. Day after day, I would follow these people, shouting the same thing over and over.

One day the man named Paul had had enough. He turned around and looked me straight in the eye. He wasn’t afraid of me, like most people are. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!

He wasn't talking to me—he was talking to the evil spirit. The evil spirit left me at once, and I felt peace flood my heart. I was free! I was no longer controlled by the spirit. I could think again and make decisions on my own. These men must truly be servants of the living God! I thought.

When my owners saw what this holy man had done, they were furious. Their chances of making money from me were gone.

Paul got into big trouble. When my masters learned that the evil spirit had left me and that I couldn't make money for them anymore, they brought Paul and his friends to the authorities and had them beaten and thrown into jail. I don't know what will happen to them.

But I do know this: I used to obey the evil spirit that lived within me, but now I am free to love and obey the one true God. Maybe I can find the way to be saved too.

## Meet the Jailer

Don't mess with me! I'm tough—so tough that the city of Philippi chose me to be its jailer. I'm one of the biggest men in the city and most people are afraid of me. That's a good thing, because if one of my prisoners were to escape, the ruler of the city would kill me in the prisoner's place. So I make sure my prisoners are too scared to make a move. My family and I actually live in this prison—we live in the front of the house, and the prisoners are kept in the back.

Two days ago four soldiers knocked at my door. They were dragging two men who were bruised and bleeding. When I opened the door they threw the men into the room and said, "Jailer, guard these men with your life. The magistrates say that they are two of the most dangerous men in the city!"

I carried them in, one after the other, to a small room we use for our most dangerous prisoners. But it was really strange. They didn't curse and shout like most of the other prisoners—not even when I put their bleeding legs into the wooden stocks.

I expected to hear them moaning or yelling after a while. But instead they prayed and sang hymns of praise to their God!

At midnight, I felt the ground shake and tremble beneath me. An earthquake! The very foundations of the prison began to shake violently, and I heard a loud commotion from all the prisoners. I dashed to the prison door and was horrified to see that the earthquake had burst open not only the main door but all the prison doors to each cell!

I felt a terrible feeling in my stomach as I realized that the prisoners had probably escaped. I knew the magistrates would kill me for letting this happen, so I drew my sword to kill myself.

Then I heard one of the two new prisoners call out to me: "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" I called the servants to light the lanterns, and came trembling to the cell where the two men waited. I knew there was something different about them when they first came to the prison, and I realized what it was at that very moment—these men served the true, living God. I asked them. "What must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

Overwhelmed with gratitude, I invited them to stay at my house and talk to my whole family about Jesus. I washed their wounds and gave them a hot meal to eat. They shared many wonderful truths about Jesus, I believed, and immediately I was baptized, along with my entire family.

Now I feel so much joy in my heart—the same joy that I saw in these men when they first came to the prison. Now my family and I will serve Jesus and tell others about him.

# Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.





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