

God is

INFINITELY MORE

than we could ever imagine...

INDIVIDUALS TO COMMUNITY

Key Passage: Acts 16

Through a dream Paul is prompted to change his travel route ending up in Philippi. Upon arrival he encounters three very different people in very different circumstances (Lydia by the river, the slave girl on the streets and the jailer who was guarding Paul and Silas in prison). The Lord works to draw these people to himself, and he wants them to learn to love one another as a testimony to the world of his saving grace.

Session Aims:

1. To help children understand that God transforms lives through his followers
2. To explore how Jesus' followers love one another
3. To encourage children to love as Jesus loved

Leader's Reflection:

In continuing to explore the overall theme of 'infinitely more', after exploring the stories of Moses and the woman at the well, we now look at the journey of Paul and Silas. Their actions are transformational for the people they meet, but only because they allow the power of God to work through them.

God provided the dream which challenged Paul to journey to where God needed him. When Paul arrived, God placed Lydia in the lives of Paul and Silas, providing the hospitality they needed. However, the circumstances through which Jesus' early followers lived and continued to follow him are not enviable. We read in Acts 16 how Paul and Silas were verbally attacked for days by a possessed woman, and then as a result of their intervention they were placed in prison.

Yet still these committed followers pray and praise God. God continues to use their ministry to save and transform lives. How do you feel in your relationship



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with God? Are you firm in your belief that God is placing you in situations where he will equip and use you to transform lives today? Identify and thank God for the times he has equipped you to love as Jesus did. Reflect and pray into those situations where you feel God is asking you to take a step of faith.

Mother Teresa said, *'I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across waters to create many ripples.'* Your ministry with children, whether it be with 1, 10 or 50, will transform lives if the love of Jesus is shared. In preparing for this session, pray that God will use and bless your commitment, wisdom and passion for teaching about the love of Jesus and equipping children to live lives to love as Jesus did.



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WARM-UP

Split the children into two teams. Mark out an area in which a team can stand - this is the jail.

Select one team to run and the other team to chase. When the chasers tag someone in the running team, that person is sent to jail. In order for them to escape from jail, a player from the running team who has not been sent to jail needs to touch the floor of the jail and shout, 'Jail break!' The game ends when every player on the running team is caught. The players then switch sides.

Explain to the children that we are going to be thinking about two people who, through God's power, were able to break free from jail and help those with invisible chains on their lives break free from those chains.

Place a glass of water in front of the children. Ask the children how this water could be transformed. If practical, place some water in a kettle and watch as the water transforms to steam, and also present some ice from a freezer. Discuss how water can be transformed but can be turned back to water either through melting or condensing. In our story today we will hear about transformations of the lives of people which can be much more permanent through the power of God.



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TELL THE STORY

There are many ways the story could be shared. Here are some ideas:

- Listen to the following recording of the story of Paul and Silas. The children could close their eyes and try to picture the characters. Additionally, you could use the copy of the transcript to get different children telling the story.
<https://kidscorner.reframemedia.com/bible-stories/the-story-of-paul-and-silas>
- If you have a large enough group of children, you could separate them into three groups with the following Bible verses and ask them to act out the three parts of the story.
 - Acts 16:13-15 Lydia
 - Acts 16:16-18 Slave girl on streets
 - Acts 16:19-26 Paul and Silas put in prison but still praise God
- God's Story: Paul and Silas in prison -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y24Ak7DJZfg>

I wonder...

- I wonder why God placed Lydia in the lives of Paul and Silas.
- I wonder how Paul felt being bothered by the slave girl.
- I wonder why Paul helped the slave girl.
- I wonder why Paul and Silas continued to praise God even when they were in prison.
- I wonder how Paul and Silas were able to transform the lives of the people they met.
- I wonder how you act when bad things happen to you.
- I wonder who God is leading you to love as Jesus would love.

Input:

Paul and Silas were obedient to God's call to journey and spread the gospel where he wanted them to go. On their arrival in Philippi, Paul and Silas met and shared with a small group of people who believed in Jesus, including Lydia who offered



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them a place to stay. As the devil doesn't like to see God moving, a slave girl who was possessed was sent to bother Paul. But through the power of God he helped her. As the girl's masters could no longer make money from her, they arranged for Paul and Silas to be placed in prison.

We believe that God is in control of all of our lives, even though sometimes things happen that we do not understand. Can you think of some examples?

Paul and Silas didn't stay in prison. After they continued to praise God even in a very dark point in their life, God not only opened the jail but also enabled them to transform the life of the jailer and move him to safety. One thing we can be very certain of, in the middle of any problems, is the love that Jesus has for us. He loves us and is in control of everything.



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EXPLORE

Masking Tape community

Explain to the children that by using rolls of masking tape they are going to create their 'ideal community'. Talk about the people, places, services that exist in a community. What would go in yours? What wouldn't go in yours? Using the tape, ask the children to stick theirs on the floor, creating a map. When complete, they can write on the tape different words which would describe their community. Talk about how Jesus modelled the importance of living in community with others and how the Early Church continued to model this.

Transformers

There are lots of examples of reversible and irreversible changes, such as baking a cake, melting a candle, burning a match, modelling with clay, melting chocolate, frying an egg, mixing bicarbonate of soda with vinegar...

Provide some of these resources so that the children can explore and see some of these different changes in action. Discuss the stories of Paul and Silas. What kind of transformations was God making in the lives of people?

Creative display

Give the children strips of paper (paper chains) and ask them to write the things which are 'chains' in their lives. What are the things which get in the way of time with God? Which make it hard to love and treat others fairly? Which are difficult parts of their character? Link these slips together to make a chain. As a group, talk about some of the steps the children can take to remove those chains.



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PRAY

Place a sand tray in front of the children.

Recall the key parts of today's story through the actions of Paul and Silas: their trust in God in dark times; their commitment to help those who were treated badly; their response of love and care for those they encountered.

Encourage the children to draw in the sand the important people in their lives who support and care for them. Thank God for who they are, and then wipe the sand clear.

Encourage the children to think about the people in their lives who they struggle to get along with. The children can write in the sand words which represent the difficulties they have, eg, hurt, jealousy, unkindness, rudeness, boasting. They could think about things they will need to change too.

Pray to God for the difficulties each of the children are facing, and ask them to think of positive ways we can be in those places. Symbolically ask the children to clear the sand, saying we are asking God to remove those problems which make it hard for us to love other people.



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TAKE HOME

When Paul and Silas were in prison, they continued to pray and praise God, sharing what they knew with others in the prison. Ask the children to share their favourite song about praising God. Encourage them to leave today singing that song in their head. When they are feeling that they are experiencing tough times this week or are challenged to love like Jesus did, do as Paul and Silas did and praise God in their own song!

