

Praise in the Prison

Lesson Scripture: Acts 16:19-32

Bible Truth: I will worship God in difficult times.

Bible Story: Acts 16:19-32

Bible Verse: "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips."
(Psalm 34:1, NIV)

FOCUS

Learning Activity: "What Time Is It?"

Preparation

Write several different times on slips of paper.

Materials
paper
markers or crayons

Presentation

Show children the various times you have written. Ask them what they do during those times. For example, show children the time 8:00 a.m. and say: "**What do you do at 8:00 a.m.?**" Choose a child to share what he/she does at that time. Continue to have a discussion about what children do during the day and night as you show the various times.

Read Psalm 34:1. Say: **Our Bible verse today reminds us that we should worship God at all times. Any time of the day is the right time to praise the Lord.**

Give each child a sheet of paper. Have them write their favorite time of day at the top of the paper and draw what they like to do at that time. Encourage the children to write Psalm 34:1 on their paper as well.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Psalm 34:1

Preparation

Write Psalm 34:1 on a piece of poster board.

On a large sheet of paper, make a poster similar to the one below. Attach it to the wall.

Materials
poster board
paper
markers or crayons
tape
small, soft ball

<u>Good Times</u>	vs.	<u>Bad Times</u>
playing with friends		sickness
listening to music		taking a test
going to church		making a mistake
time with family		family problems

Explanation

Read the *Good Times vs. Bad Times* poster on the wall. Discuss how children feel during the good times and the bad times.

Give a soft ball to a child. Ask him to throw it at one of the signs. If the ball hits the *Good Times* side, ask him to say, "I will praise God during the good times." If the ball hits the *Bad Times* side, ask him to say, "I will praise God during the bad times."

Say: **What is easier, to praise the God during good times or bad times? Why?** Read Psalm 34:1 with the children. Say: **Do you remember the fancy word we learned that means to praise God?** Allow children to answer. **Yes, it is extol. When does God want us to extol, or praise Him?** Allow children to answer. **Does God want us to praise Him only when good things happen to us?** Allow children to answer. **When should we praise Him?** Allow children to answer.

Memorization Activity

Allow each child to throw the ball at the poster. When hitting the poster, have each child say the Bible memorization verse twice.

INSTRUCT

Bible Story: "Paul and Silas Praise in the Prison," Acts 16:19-32

Preparation

Read and study Acts 16:19-32.

Ask a teen or adult to prepare to tell the Bible story from the perspective of the jailer. Provide him with a Bible costume to wear.

Materials
Bible
Bible costume

Presentation

Say: Today we are going to hear from a man who saw people worshipping God in a prison! How could you praise God in a prison? Let's listen as he tells us the story.

The person dressed as a jailer enters. He says: **Hello boys and girls.** I am in charge of a jail in a city called Philippi. One day, two men, who had been severely beaten by Roman guards, were brought to my jail. "Lock these men in prison," the guards ordered. "Make sure they don't escape. If they escape, you will pay with your life." You see, during this time in history, if prisoners escaped from jail, the man in charge of the jail would be killed. Since I didn't want to lose my life if these men escaped, I put them in the deepest, most secure cell in prison. I had chains put on their hands and feet. However, I noticed that these two prisoners were different from any other prisoners I had. Most prisoners yelled, cried, screamed, or cursed when they were put in chains and thrown in a cell. These two didn't complain or curse. They went to the cell quietly. I learned that they were Jews. Their names were Paul and Silas. They had spent several days in the city teaching about their God. Perhaps that was the reason they didn't complain or curse.

After I made sure all the prisoners were chained and well guarded, I went to sleep in my room next to the prison. Several times throughout the night I thought I heard loud voices and singing, but since I knew the prison doors were closed and guarded, I went back to sleep. But suddenly, exactly at midnight, there was a great earthquake and the prison walls started to move. I ran toward the prison doors. They were open. I was sure all the prisoners had escaped. I knew that when the Roman officials found out about this, they would beat me and then kill me. So, I took out my sword, determined to end my life before the officials could torture me.

At that time, someone yelled out of the darkness in the prison, "Don't hurt yourself! All the prisoners are here!" I asked one of the servants to bring me a candle, and I went inside the prison. All the prisoners were still there. And standing among them were Paul and Silas. I fell down at their feet. I knew that if they had kept everyone from escaping, it was because of their God. I wanted to know their God too!

"What should I do to be saved?" I asked. "Believe in Jesus and you will be saved," answered Paul.

I immediately believed in Jesus, who had freed Paul and Silas from prison. He was the Son of God. I took Paul and Silas home. I woke up everyone there. Then Paul and Silas spoke to my family about Jesus. They also believed in Him. Before sunrise, we were all baptized and were praising the Lord along with Paul and Silas. God used their worship to help lead my family to salvation. Jailer exits.

Say: Paul and Silas could have been angry and sad while in prison. Instead, they chose to worship God in the middle of their troubles. They didn't know that God was going to rescue them. When you are facing a bad time, sometimes God will rescue you from the problem. Other times He may choose to comfort you while you are going through the situation. Always remember that God loves you, and keep praising Him no matter what happens! He can use your worship to be an example to others, just as He did with Paul and Silas and the jailer.

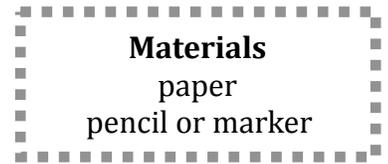
APPLICATION

Learning Activity: Skits, "I Will Praise at All Times"

Preparation

Write each of the following scenarios on different sheets of paper.

1. Mary is planning to go to the park with her friends this weekend. When she wakes up Saturday morning, she has a fever and is feeling sick to her stomach.
2. John really struggles in math class. His teacher just announced that they are having a surprise test.
3. Katie's best friend just yelled at her and said she doesn't want to be friends anymore.
4. Joe really wanted to be on his school soccer team. This morning he learned that the coach did not choose him to be on the team.



Presentation

Divide children into four groups and give each group a paper with a different scenario written on it. Ask them to prepare a skit to show how the child can still praise God during this bad time. When groups are ready, have them present their skits to the class.

MINISTRY TIME

Preparation

None

Presentation

Say: **We all go through difficult times. Let's practice praising God**

during difficult times. As a group, lead the children in saying the following phrase for each of the bad times listed on the poster: Even if _____, I will praise the Lord. For example, "Even if I am sick, I will praise the Lord!" Say a prayer asking God to remind the children that He is with them during the bad times.

Materials
poster from the Scripture
memorization activity

BONUS ACTIVITY

Game: Jailed

Preparation

Choose an area in the room or outside that will be designated as a jail. Prepare a sign that says "Jail" and put it in the designated area.

Presentation

Choose one child to be the "jailer" for each five or ten children. The "jailers" try to capture the children by tagging them. When a child is captured, the jailer will put him/her in jail. When the teacher screams "Earthquake!" the children that were in jail are freed and the game starts over again.

Materials
paper
marker or crayon

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