

Peter's (Not So) Great Escape

Acts 12

WHAT A WEEK!

The church suffers a loss.
Acts 12:1-4

The church uses its power.
Acts 12:5-12

The church shows its faith?
Acts 12:13-19

The church out lives us all.
Acts 12:20-25

FOUR THINGS TO REMEMBER IN A CRISIS

1. Prayer isn't just something we do; it's someone we're with.
Acts 12:5-12, Matthew 7:7-12, John 15:1-8, Romans 10:14-16, James 5:13-18
2. The opposite of faith is inaction; not doubt.
Acts 12:9, 11, 15-16, Mark 9:14-29, Matthew 8:23-27
3. It's not the amount; it's the object of our faith that matters.
Acts 12:5, James 2:17-20, Matthew 17:14-21
4. We ask for what we want, but God decides what we get.
Acts 12:1-4, 24-25, James 1:16-17

Growth Group Homework

For the week of October 5, 2008

QUICK REVIEW: Looking back at this week's teaching on "Peter's (Not So) Great Escape" was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. What was your response when you heard the early church prayed for Peter's release but then couldn't believe their prayer was answered?

2. Can you think of times when you find it easier to pray than others?

3. When you were growing up, how was crisis handled by the people you lived with (mark any that apply)? Is it any different than how you face it today?

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| • Bring it on | • Don't admit it |
| • God's going to grow us | • Who's fault is it? |
| • Don't tell anybody | • Why does this happen to us? |
| • God's here | • Prayer happened |
| • Avoid at all costs | • Other |

DIGGING DEEPER

1. We have a variety of expectations of how God responds to us when we pray to Him. What are two or three things we can learn from Luke 11:1-13 about prayer and God's response when we come to Him?

Luke 11:1-13

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." [2] He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. [3] Give us each day our daily bread. [4] Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'" [5] Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, [6] because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' [7] 'Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' [8] I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. [9] 'So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. [10] For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. [11] 'Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will

give him a snake instead? [12] Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" [NIV]

When I pray to God, I sense that He is (be honest about any that apply)...

- not all that interested
- ready to listen
- wondering why I can't focus
- a wise and faithful King ready to guide me
- a compassionate father
- wondering where I've been
- disappointed or even upset with my life
- ready to help
- other

2. We heard this weekend that we're given the freedom to ask for what we want, but that God decides what we get. How might the following verses help you in the midst of a crisis?

Romans 8:1-2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [2] because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. [NIV]

Romans 8:15-18

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. [18] I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [NIV]

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [NIV]

Romans 8:31

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? [NIV]

Romans 8:35, 38-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

[38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [NIV]

Which of these verses is most important for you to remember and why?

How or when might sharing these verses with someone in crisis be a helpful thing? Is there a time when they might not be helpful (see Romans 12:15)?

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. [NIV]

3. The early church gives a good example of how a crisis motivates us to pray. In the midst of these crises we often grow in our ability to pray and connect with God. This kind of growth can launch us into new desires and ways to pray for others when the heat isn't on. How could Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-12 help guide your prayer for others beyond the crisis zone?

Colossians 1:9-12

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. [10] And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, [11] being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. [NIV]

Suggestion – try re-writing this prayer in your own words for someone you know or yourself.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Is there a specific way you deal with crises or is there a lesson you've learned about prayer you'd like to further develop as a result of this week's teaching and study?

2. Is there a certain situation or person you want to keep praying for or would like to ask prayer for?