**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Better Together**

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ([Ephesians 4:3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph4.3))

*The Christian life is never lived alone. When we become a Christian, we’re adopted into God’s family. We’re welcomed into a community. We’re meant to live and grow in faith together. But that takes humility and intentionality. We grow together as we pray and study Scripture together. We bear responsibility for one another by our encouragement and our honoring of those in authority. God is growing us together into one body, one family.*

**Session Overview**

**Pray Together**

**Biblical Encounter:** The Church Prays and Peter Is Set Free ([Acts 12:1–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac12.1-16))

**Outcome:** Pray together for God’s help and believe He will answer.

*In this session, we discover what happens when people stand together in prayer. There is power in prayer, yet many tend to pray as last resort. We choose to go it alone rather than calling on others to pray with or for us. But there is something special about a community of believers petitioning their Father together. It’s when we gather in prayer with others that our faith is stirred for greater things. In our discussion, we’ll explore how prayer with others can lead to supernatural moments and encounters with God.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Disposable plastic cups, 15 per team, stacked in a pyramid on each end of a table* *• Table* *• Candy or treat for winning team****Getting Ready*** *• Set up a table. Stack the cups in a pyramid on each end of table (5 on the bottom row, then 4, 3, 2, and 1 on the top).* *• Based on the size of your group, determine how to play the game. For smaller groups, play as described so that a player stacks or collapses all the cups. For larger groups, consider having team members stack just one cup per turn.* *•* ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for the*** [**Facilitator Guide**](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)**.** |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [***BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads***](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Pray that students would have open hearts and minds to discover that prayer with others builds their faith. Ask that they would boldly pray for others who are facing tough situations and believe God will answer.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**Can you think of a time when you decided to do something by yourself and later realized that you should’ve asked for help? |

There are situations when having a little extra help would have made a difference in the outcome. The good news is that when we come into a relationship with Jesus, we become part of a larger family. God created us to have a full life with people around us, not to live life alone.

One of the greatest forms of communication God has given us is prayer—a conversation with God. Even better, He intended for our faith family to pray to Him together as well. There are moments in life when we will feel we don’t have enough faith, strength, or even courage to hope for the best on our own. This is where we can see God move through the community of believers surrounding us.

**Group Activity**

**Cup Stack Relay**

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Today, we’ll play a game that requires you to work together and support one another. We’ll start off by having two teams facing their end of the table. Each team has fifteen cups stacked like a pyramid in front of them. The first player will collapse the pyramid, so that all the cups are now stacked inside each other. The next player will restack their cups back into the pyramid formation. The remaining players alternate between collapsing and building the pyramid until all players have had a turn. The first team to have all their members stack and unstack the cups wins.

• *Play the game.*

• *Play again if you have additional groups who didn’t get a chance to compete the first time.*

• *Award prizes to the winning team.*

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| **QUESTION**Would the game have been as fun if it had been just one person playing instead of a team? |

Although there are moments when doing things alone can be better, lots of things in life are just better when done with others. You might say life is a team activity. If this game didn’t use teams, it wouldn’t have been the same. This is a lot like our Christian faith. Many parts of our walk with Jesus benefit from doing them with others. That includes praying together. We are better together. Here’s a video that will help to introduce this idea.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

**Peter Was Arrested and the Church Prayed**

Read [Acts 12:1–5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac12.1-5).

Persecution was increasing for Christians during this time. Similar to how Saul was determined to arrest Christians before he became a believer in [Acts 9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9), others continued to punish believers. Christians were being arrested and even murdered for their faith in Jesus.

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| **QUESTION**Why was Peter arrested? |

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| **QUESTION**How many guards was Peter shackled to according to these verses? |

The easiest thing to do at this moment would have been for Peter to deny his relationship with Jesus. After all, he had done that in the past ([Luke 22:54–62](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk22.54-62)). His friend James had been killed, and now Peter had been arrested. That would’ve been a lot for any believer to handle. But at the same time, others were praying for him. They didn’t just pray some quick and insincere prayer for him. They prayed earnestly, which means seriously.

What happened to Peter in these verses continues today around the world. There are numerous stories of believers being arrested for their faith. Some have even been killed.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think people persecute Christians? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think Christians should respond to persecution? |

**God Responded by Sending Help**

Read [Acts 12:6–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac12.6-11).

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| **QUESTION**When did Peter realize he was truly free? |

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| **QUESTION**Why didn’t Peter realize what was really going on before this moment? |

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| **QUESTION**What part did prayer play in Peter’s supernatural release from prison? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you think Peter knew how much his friends were praying for him to be released? Why or why not? |

It’s important to surround ourself with friends like those who prayed for Peter. We need friends who will pray for miracles on our behalf when we are in hard seasons or situations. Peter needed a miracle, and he had people around him who loved him enough to believe that God could do a miracle. Similarly, our group can be vital in your faith walk.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever had God rescue you from a harmful situation? What happened? |

Peter may have thought, *This is it. I’m going to die just like James did*. But Peter had a faith-filled community around him who didn’t give up easily, even if others had been killed for their faith. We can see that his friends could be trusted to pray for his miracle. The people we surround ourself with will either encourage us to believe that God can do miracles, or push us toward fear and discouragement.

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| **QUESTION**How can your Christian friends play a part when you are facing a tough situation? |

**The Church Was Amazed to See God’s Answer**

Read [Acts 12:12–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac12.12-16).

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Rhoda was able to recognize Peter’s voice? |

Although Rhoda was a servant at Mary’s home, she immediately recognized Peter’s voice. This tells us that he had probably spent a lot of time with his faith community who were then gathered in Mary’s home.

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| **QUESTION**How would you have reacted if you had found Peter at the door after praying for his release? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Rhoda left Peter outside the house when she ran to tell everyone that he was outside? |

She was so happy that Peter was now standing outside that it seems she forgot to let him in. She may have also been shocked that their prayers had been answered.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been surprised when one of your prayers was suddenly answered? |

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| **QUESTION**What was the reaction of the people when they opened the door and saw Peter? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you think we should be more surprised and astonished when God answers prayers or not surprised at all? Explain. |

God gave Peter a way out. Just as importantly, God showed Peter and the other believers the power of praying together. We must be part of a community like Peter had, so that when we need a miracle, we have people standing with us. When our prayers are answered, we have people to share with and rejoice.

We may not always be able to pray with others, but we should always take advantage of it when we have the chance. Of course, there are times when we need to pray alone with God. But there is something about praying with and for others that ignites our faith.

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| **QUESTION**How do you think everyone’s faith changed as a result of what happened to Peter? |

**Did You Know?**

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| The King Herod in Acts 12 is Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of King Herod the Great who tried to kill Baby Jesus in Bethlehem. Herod Agrippa’s persecution of the Church is a very strange and unique persecution as a king over the Jews. He didn’t hunt believers because of doctrine, as Saul did, but more so as a publicity stunt. We see this through his seeking the approval of others when he arrested Peter, and also how he executed James with the sword (beheaded him). In Judaism, execution was usually done by stoning (*see* Acts 7), but Herod chose to kill James by a Roman method, which would have been as a public spectacle. Similarly, the persecution of the Church just a few years later, the *damnatio ad bestias* (feeding believers to wild beasts), was also very public. |

**Reflect**

**Pray together for God’s help and believe He will answer.**

Peter was placed in a situation that seemed physically impossible to survive. Behind the scenes, his church family started praying for him. Then an amazing miracle happened. Through this example, we see the value of having a faith community, a circle of Christian friends who stand with us. Peter had his own strong walk with Jesus, but he also relied on others. When Christians pray, miracles can definitely happen. As you follow Jesus, it’s important to also surround yourself with others following Him. It can make a huge difference in your life.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection after reading the questions. Then ask students if they want to share. Sharing your personal response may also be helpful to the students.*

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| **QUESTION**Do you believe that God answers your prayers? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**How has this Bible story challenged you when it comes to prayer? |

**Activate**

Let’s activate what you just learned about Peter and the importance of building and staying in community. Next time there is a need in your group, lead in prayer for the situation. Remind everyone of this story and how a group of friends stood together in prayer, and by doing so, saw God perform a miracle.

**Conclusion**

We are not meant to walk our Christian faith alone. God created us to be in unity and community. Community strengthens us, challenges us, produces miracles, and allows others to see Jesus. It takes intentionality to grow this community. The story we just discussed clearly showed us how prayer with others changes circumstances. It also showed us that there may be people praying for us that we aren’t aware of at the time. God still hears His people’s prayers today.

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*When we choose to follow Jesus, we are acknowledging that we need Him in our lives. He came to bring us life. We get to have a relationship with God because of Jesus. If you don’t have a relationship with Jesus yet, today is a great day to start.**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

Father God, thank You for first wanting us to be in community with You so we can have a relationship with You. Thank You for providing a family of believers so that we can grow our faith together and encourage one another. Help us to continue to pray bold prayers and be part of this community of faith. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Don’t forget to open the Bible Engagement Project app this week to find the personal devotions. These allow you to spend time in God’s Word on your own and put into practice the things we’ve been learning. I look forward to seeing each of you next time as we continue our journey in God’s Word.