

WEEK THIRTEEN

**0 THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PERSECUTED  
– THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

**BIG IDEA**

When people treat you wrongly because you are a Christian,

**KEEP TRUSTING IN GOD**

JESUS UNDERSTANDS, AND WILL BLESS AND HONOUR YOU.

**PREP**

- Paper handcuffs for each child. (Make handcuffs from two taped paper loops linked by a piece of string).
- Find or buy a plain pillowcase for each child (these are often available at op shops).
- Have one of the adults come to family time dressed in a uniform of some sort – a policeman’s hat or soldier’s badge or something similar.

**WHAT GOES IN THE BOX?**

- Paper handcuffs.
- A key for each child that unlocks something in the house – a door, cupboard, drawer, etc.
- Paper strips (e.g. an A4 page cut length-ways) to make a paper chain. You need one strip for each person.
- Scissors
- The plain pillowcases
- Pens for decorating the pillowcases – use fabric pens or permanent markers.



**INTRO**

Today’s beatitude is from Mathew 5:11 - *Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (NIV Bible)*

Do you remember that we talked about God’s kingdom being really different from the world’s values? Well, when Jesus’ announced the Good News he was saying that God’s kingdom way of thinking has already started. Because we love Jesus we may not always be popular with everyone, and sometimes we may need to face hard things – things like people mocking us for not joining in bad games, or saying mean words, or bullying. Jesus says that even if people tell lies about us because we are Christians we can praise God. He sees and will honour us. Jesus was also treated like that.

“REMEMBER THOSE WHO ARE IN PRISON,  
AS THOUGH YOU ARE IN PRISON WITH THEM.”

- HEBREW 13:3 -

- The parent dressed as soldier/policeman, arrests the children, and handcuffs them using the paper handcuffs.
- Make the children sit chained on the floor while you read the story.

## READ

Before you read, take the time to choose a praise song that you all know. Tell the children they will need to listen to the story to know the right time to sing it!

Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrown in jail because they were telling people about Jesus and doing miracles in Jesus' name. When they healed a slave girl, her owners were very upset. Instead of being happy and praising God, they were angry when she was healed because they could no longer use her psychic powers to make money. They created a riot in the city, and dragged Paul and Silas to the magistrates who had them flogged and then locked up.

The jailers were told to make sure Paul and Silas were bound securely, so they were put in a cold, dark inner cell with no windows and chained so they could not move.

Bleeding and sore, they must have felt terrible. It wasn't fair. It wasn't right. But they decided to respond by praising God. They sang songs together and prayed. They sang

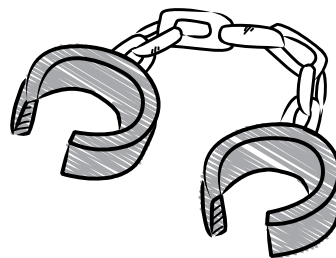
so loudly that everyone in the prison could hear them. The other prisoners must have wondered what was going on.

*Everyone sing the chosen praise song*

As Paul and Silas sang, they felt the ground shake – an earthquake flung the prison doors wide open and their arms fell free as the chains fell off.

*Pull the chains off the children's wrists...*

When the jailer was woken by the quake he was very afraid. He was responsible for all the prisoners and if any of them escaped he knew that he would be killed. When he saw the prison door swing open, he decided the best thing would be to take his own life. But Paul cried out "Stop!"



and reassured him not one single prisoner had run away.

The jailer ran with a fire torch to check for himself, and was amazed to discover that, just as Paul had said, the prisoners were all there. He fell down on his knees before Paul and Silas and said "What must I do to be saved?"

They told him and his household to simply believe in the Lord Jesus. He was so grateful that he helped Paul and Silas by washing their wounds and giving them something to eat. And he asked Paul and Silas to baptise everyone in his household. Later, the officials realised that Paul was a Roman citizen, and it was illegal to treat him so badly. They begged Paul and Silas to leave so there would be no more trouble.

*From Acts: 16-40*

## WEEK THIRTEEN

### FAMILY TALK TIME

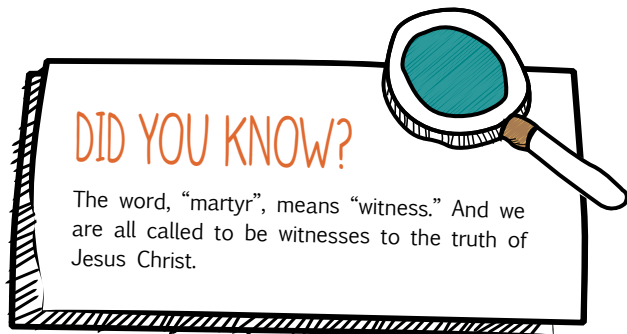
Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that when things go wrong, God is not pleased with us. Paul and Silas knew that wasn't true. They knew that even though bad things were happening, they could still praise and worship God, and know that God loved them and was caring for them. And a really neat thing happened out of it – they shared the good news of Jesus with the jailer, and all his family became followers of Jesus. What a blessing that was!

Sometimes things happen to us that are not fair. It wasn't fair that Paul and Silas were put in prison.

- **Can you think of something that has happened to you that was unfair?**
- **What did you do?**
- **What did Paul and Silas do?**

Even though Paul and Silas were captured and put in prison by the city officials, they could still praise God, because Jesus had captured their hearts.

When everything seems to go wrong and we are unfairly judged we often complain and feel sorry for ourselves, but God wants us to praise Him.



Jesus says “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*” *Mathew 5:45*

- **How could you pray for someone who was being nasty and causing trouble?**

### ACTIVITY

- Take out the keys and put them on the table.

**What do you think each of these keys will lock and unlock?**

- Let everyone take a key and find which lock it fits.

Choose the child with the smallest shoe size to take you to the keyhole their key fits. Then work through the rest of the family.

Let's think about locking and unlocking

- **Do you find that kids sometimes lock people in or out of their group?**
- **Have you ever been locked out of a group of friends, or locked out of a special activity?**
- **Have you ever been locked out by others because you believe in Jesus? What did you do?**

Sometimes we get locked into being a certain type of person – like people might assume that you won't be really sporty if they know you follow Jesus.

But when we trust God and praise Him, He will open locked doors. He wants to fulfil what He has planned for you. He is way bigger than other people's plans..

### ACTIVITY

#### Praise Pillows

Two of the best times to pray are when we wake up and when we go to bed. Remembering to praise God at

these times is really important and helps us know that God is in charge, and that he is with us.

- Give everyone a plain pillowcase and fabric pens, vivids or felt-tip markers that are permanent.
- Write in the centre “I will praise God.”
- Let the children draw their own decorations around this statement. Put the pillowcases on their pillows as a reminder to praise God, especially when things are hard.

## PRAY

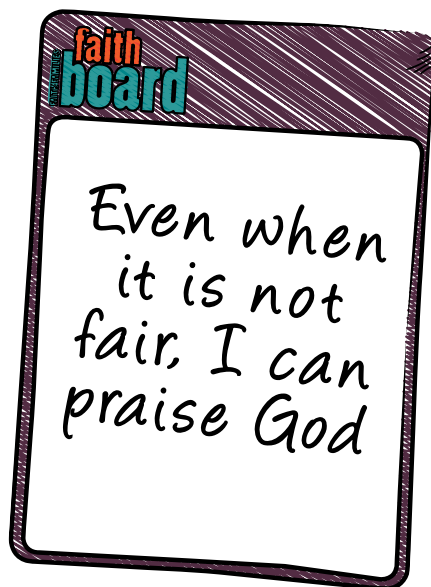
Paul and Silas were persecuted for believing in Jesus. That was 2,000 years ago, but even today Christians are persecuted in many places of the world. We want to remember to pray for them.

- Make paper prayer chains – everyone writes a sentence prayer for the persecuted church on a strip of paper. Make them into a chain.

A parent uses the words to lead a family prayer.

## LIVE

This week at the dinner table, talk about different countries where it is not easy to follow Jesus e.g. North Korea, India, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya or Indonesia. What would it be like to live there? Help the children find these places on a map or globe.



## OTHER IDEAS

### • To Read

1. Archaeologists digging in the remains of a school for imperial messengers in Rome found a picture dating from the third century. It shows a boy standing, his hand raised, worshiping a figure on a cross, a figure that looks like a man with the head of an ass. Scrawled in the writing of a young person are the words, “Alexamenos worships his God.” Nearby in a second inscription: “Alexamenos is faithful.” Apparently, a boy who was a Christian was being mocked by his schoolmates for his faithful witness. But he was not ashamed; he was faithful.

2. With older children, make Chinese Finger Traps These were originally made of bamboo, but can be made of paper, fabric or ribbon. They are cylinders that trap an unsuspecting index finger. Once trapped, the more one tries to escape, the tighter the trap becomes. The trick to escaping is to push the ends of the trap inward, toward the middle, so enlarging the openings. You will need 4 arm length strips of ribbon. <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Chinese-Finger-Trap>

- Check out the website for the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church at <http://idop.org/pages/resources/childrens-material.php> It has some great stories and children’s activities.