



## Introduction

The early Christian church, once it was subject to persecution, learned very quickly that survival required it to work hard at depending upon God - and each other. The story of Peter in Acts 12:1 - 17 involves a miraculous escape but also an interesting reflection on what can happen when people pray... even when they don't expect it to work!

The first Christians believed that, as Jesus' friends, they could work together as one to do amazing things, similar to the way in which the different parts of a human body - legs, arms, feet, hands - work together as one. They were all dependent on each other, like one big family, called the Body of Christ, with Jesus, of course, as the head.

## Preparation

Give the children some 'ways in' to appreciate the feelings exhibited by different characters in the story. Younger children can (at the sound of a musical instrument) make appropriate faces associated with the feelings - for example, scared, brave, puzzled, amazed... . Older children can create statues and/or movements of these feelings - for example, people praying; something strong and powerful and superhuman; someone wandering along a dark passage; someone being surprised...

## Development

For younger children, divide the class into either three groups (Peter, servant, friends) or four groups (Peter, angel, servant, friends). For older children, number them off 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on, in a circle, then call out each group to retell successively the story in words and actions (*given in italics*).

One of the first Christians was a man called Peter, who was locked up by King Herod for talking about Jesus. So there he was, sitting in jail, chained to the wall. (*Peter sits in the middle.*) There were guards watching him closely. (*Everyone else look at him and glare.*)

Meanwhile, some of Peter's friends got together at a house and started praying for him:

'Let our brother Peter be set free! Lord, please bring him back!'

It was the night before the trial. Peter was asleep in his cell when he heard a voice (*knock! knock!*).

Peter woke up and said: 'Who's there?'

'Armageddon.'

'Armageddon who?', asked Peter.



'Armageddon you out of here.'

The cell was filled with light - but the guards stayed fast asleep. In front of Peter stood a strange figure... human... but more than human too. Was it an angel? The chains fell off Peter's wrists (*clink! clatter!*).

'Get dressed', said the stranger. 'Clothes. Sandals. Your cloak. Ready? Follow me.'

Meanwhile, Peter's friends were still praying:

'Lord, let our brother Peter be set free! Lord, please bring him back!'

The stranger led Peter out through a series of doors, past the guards, who didn't see him. And then he was out in the street. Peter suddenly realised he was... alone. The visitor had gone.

'I'd better find the others', he thought, and went to find the house where the church met. They were still praying:

'Lord, let our brother Peter be set free! Lord, please bring him back!'

Peter knocked on the door (*knock! knock!*).

A servant girl came to the door to find out who it was and asked: 'Who's there?'

'Will...'

'Will who?'

'Will you let me in, it's cold out here! It's me, Peter!'

'Peter?' The servant was so excited, she slammed the door and dashed off to tell the others, who were still praying: 'It's Peter! He's at the door!'

'SHHH! We're praying!'

'It's Peter! He's here!'

'Oh no he isn't!'

'Oh yes he is!' (and so on...)

And Peter said: 'Oh yes it is! It's me!'

Finally, they worked out what had happened, and let Peter in.



- I wonder what questions his friends had for him?
- I wonder what this story has to say about prayer?
- I wonder what this story has to say about being a Christian?