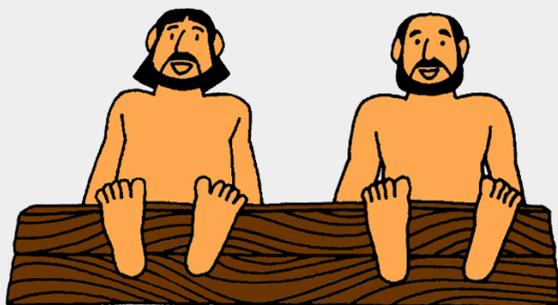


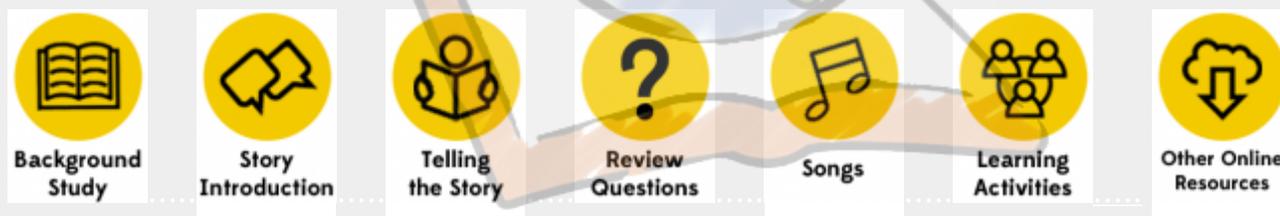
# A Jailer Becomes a Christian

Scripture Reference: [Acts 16:16-40](#)



**Suggested Emphasis:** In Christ we can experience true joy despite our circumstances.

**Memory Verse:** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Philippians 4:4, NIV



## Story Overview:

Paul cast an evil spirit out of a young slave girl but her owners were angry and brought Paul and Silas before the city magistrates. Even though they were both beaten and thrown into prison they were heard singing hymns and praying to God during the night. After an earthquake Paul and Silas taught the jailer and his household about Jesus. Before the night was over they were all baptised. The next day Paul and Silas were released from prison.

# Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

[Philippi](#) was a Macedonian frontier town, a Roman colony and a military outpost. A section of the 1,120 kilometre (696 mile) Roman road system called the [Via Egnacia](#) passed through Philippi. This meant the city was on a direct trade and military route that connected what is now modern-day Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, Greece, and European Turkey (information taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via\\_Egnatia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Egnatia)).

The situation in Philippi was unlike earlier mission work. There was no synagogue to attend and there were no groups of Jews who already respected God and were waiting for an expected Messiah. Instead, Paul and his travelling companions (Silas, Timothy and Luke) started their work in Philippi by seeking out the few people who had gathered outside the city, by a river to pray. One of these people, [Lydia, along with those in her household had already become Christians](#).

A slave girl followed Paul and his companions yelling at them day after day while they were trying to talk to people about Jesus. Annoyed, but knowing this girl was under the control of an evil spirit, Paul cast the spirit out. Immediately, the girl was her true self again and no longer controlled by the unwelcome spirit.

The evil spirit had given the young woman the apparent ability to tell fortunes. Her owners had made money off of this so were angry at the monetary loss.

Order and control would have been important in a Roman military outpost like Philippi. There was an ongoing tension between the Roman government and the Jews so, when the gathering crowd joined the slave girl's owners in accusing Paul and Silas, the officials would have wanted to appease everyone and not let things escalate. There were no legal charges but it must have seemed simplest to just get rid of these Jewish outsiders in

favour of the Roman citizens living in Philippi. After all, by law Roman citizens must have a proper trial but these were only Jewish rabbis from far-off Antioch and Jerusalem. We learn later in the story ([Acts 16:35](#)) that the officials were planning on letting the crowd settle down and then, early the next morning, quietly telling the jailer (the officer in charge of the jail) to release the prisoners and send them on their way.

While hurting, bleeding and confined to a small dark place one might expect that these two men would cower and retreat into depression. Instead, Paul and Silas did the unthinkable. As the other prisoners listened to them they began praying and singing hymns to God.

If a prisoner escaped a guard would usually have to pay with his life. His attempt to kill himself was accepting the inevitable. After Paul stopped him and revealed that no prisoners had escaped, the jailer was willing to put his life in their hands.

Paul and Silas go on to tell the jailer and everyone in his household about Jesus. Not even waiting until morning the jailer tends to Paul and Silas' wounds then proceeds to be baptised along with everyone in his household. In one night this man had experienced a catastrophic earthquake, watched the prison he was in charge of be reduced to rubble, had a last-minute reprieve from committing suicide and would still have to answer to his superiors in the morning but, still after his baptism...

*“The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” Acts 16:34, NIV*

In the morning Paul reveals the fact that he and Silas were *Roman citizens*. The magistrates had broken Roman law by beating Roman citizens publicly without a trial. Paul could have quietly left the city but he decided to make a statement about his

legitimacy as a citizen. Likely, this would have protected Lydia, the jailer and other Christians in Philippi from unnecessary prejudice later on. As time goes by a church is established in Philippi. Paul will later write letter to them and the letter, [the Book of Philippians](#), can be read in the New Testament. The theme of the Philippian letter is joy.

There are many lessons to learn from this story and joy while undergoing trials is just one of them. Paul and Silas rejoiced in a dark prison cell and the jailer rejoiced in his new faith despite the chaos of his life.

- [🔍 What happened before this story?](#)
- [📅 What happens after this story?](#)
- [📖 List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

[top](#)

## Way to Introduce the Story:

Teach the class how to sing "[Rejoice in the Lord Always.](#)" You might want to combine with another class for the song. If you do not feel confident at leading singing, ask a guest to come to your class and teach the song. "Class, did you know that those words in that song come directly from the bible? (Have one of the children look up and read Philippians 4:4) Guess who wrote those words. (Paul). Paul said to rejoice in the Lord always. Paul was happy to be a Christian even when bad things happened to him. Let's listen to today's story and you will see what I mean . . ."

[top](#)

## The Story:

Paul was a missionary. He and his friends (Silas, Timothy and Luke) travelled to many places teaching people about Jesus. When they were in the city of Philippi they liked to go to a quiet place by a river where people were praying. People there wanted to know

more and more.

As they were leaving the city to go to the river a young slave girl began shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." Even though that sounded like a good thing she kept following after them and yelling the same thing over and over. Soon no one could hear Paul and his friends talking about Jesus because the slave girl was interrupting them with her shouting.

Paul became annoyed but he knew the slave girl was not acting like she would normally act. An evil spirit was causing her to act this way. So he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her and she was herself again.

The girl must have been happy but she was not free to go home. She was a slave. To be a slave is like having a boss and doing whatever he or she wants you to do all of the time but never being paid. But instead of a boss this person is called an owner.

When the evil spirit lived in the girl people would pay the owners money so they could come and listen to the girl tell them what would happen in their future. The slave girl had to do what her owners said even when she was tired or sick.

The slave girl's owners were very angry that Paul made the evil spirit leave the girl. Without the evil spirit living in her she could not tell people's futures. If she could not tell the future then no one would pay them money.

The girl's owners grabbed Paul and Silas and drug them to the market place in the middle of the city. Magistrates are like judges in a court so the owners started telling lies and complaining to the magistrates. The magistrates did not want any trouble so they made a decision to put Paul and Silas in prison without even having a fair court trial first.

The magistrates ordered Paul and Silas beaten and then they told the jailer (the man in

charge of the prison) to guard them very carefully.

To make sure they did not escape the jailer had stocks put around Paul and Silas' feet before putting them in a prison cell in the middle of the prison. Then he locked the door.

Paul and Silas must have been hurting from the beating and the prison must have been dark and scary. But they did not give up. In fact, in the middle of the night the other prisoners were surprised to hear singing and praying coming from the middle of the prison. Even though all of these terrible things were happening Paul and Silas still trusted God and were glad that they were Christians.

While Paul and Silas were singing hymns something amazing happened. A huge earthquake shook the entire prison. After the earthquake the chains fell off all of the prisoners and the cell doors flew open.

The jailer rushed into the prison and saw that all of the doors were open. He thought all of the prisoners had escaped and knew he would be in big trouble. He was so sure of this that he took out his sword and started to kill himself.

But Paul shouted at him to stop. None of the prisoners had escaped.

The jailer knew that Paul had saved his life. He took Paul and Silas to his house so that Paul could tell him and his family about Jesus. The jailer decided he wanted to follow Jesus. He did not want to wait so he took care of Paul and Silas' wounds and then went immediately to be baptised.

After they saw the jailer being baptised everyone in his household wanted to be baptised as well. Even though it had been a terrible night the jailer rejoiced because he and his household now believed in God and Jesus.

The next day the magistrates decided to let Paul and Silas out of prison. Paul reminded

them that it was against the Roman law for them to put a Roman citizen in prison without a trial. They did not want to get in trouble so they treated Paul and Silas very nicely. Paul and Silas visited with the other Christians in Philippi and then left the city to go and tell other people about Jesus.

Years after leaving Philippi Paul will write a letter to the church there. In your Bible this letter is called the Book of Philippians. One of the things Paul wrote in the letter was this:

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” Philippians 4:4, NIV*

[top](#)

## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here for the printable illustrations](#). Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Or use the video below. Thank you, David!

## Review Questions:

1. How was the slave girl bothering Paul and Silas in Philippi? She was following them around and yelling when they were trying to teach people.
2. Why were the slave girl's owners angry at Paul and Silas? Their slave girl could not tell fortunes any more so they could not make money.
3. What did Paul and Silas do in prison? Sang and prayed
4. Why did the jailer try to kill himself? An earthquake opened the prison doors and all of their chains fell off. He thought the prisoners would escape and that he would be in trouble.
5. How long did it take the jailer to decide to be baptised? Less than one hour

## Song Suggestions:

- [Happy all the Time \(Inright, outright\) Song](#)
- [If You're Happy and You Know It Song](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always](#)
- [All Wrapped Up, All Tied Up, All Tangled Up in Jesus!](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

### *Activities:*

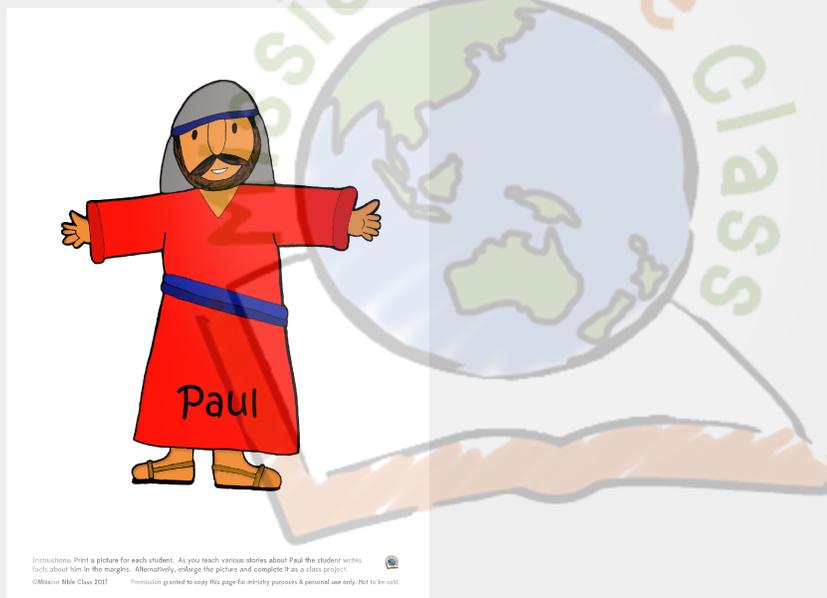
- On the map point out that this story also took place in Philippi where Lydia lived.
- Application: Use [situation cards](#) to discuss how to have joy in various situations.

### *Crafts:*

- Make a relief map of Paul's Journeys featuring the place in today's story. If you are

studying about Paul's journeys over a few lessons then you could add more details to the map each time you learn about another stop on the journey. Instructions on how to make a relief map at <http://www.squidoo.com/salt-dough-maps>

- Have the children copy [Philippians 4:4](#) or [James 1:2-3](#) onto a poster and decorate it. Display it in your classroom or encourage the children to put it in a prominent place in their room at home.
- If you are teaching a series of lessons about Paul then you might draw an outline of him on a large poster or paper and then add descriptive words about him each time you study a new lesson ([printable picture here](#)). Alternatively, you might draw a new outline shape of him each week on a whiteboard or even with a stick in the sand (if you are outside) and guide children in adding descriptive words or events inside the outlined shape as a review. Lessons from the life of Paul are:



- [Saul \(Paul\) Becomes a Christian](#)
- [The Antioch Church](#)
- [Paul's 1st Journey- Lystra](#)
- [Paul's 2nd Journey-Macedonian Vision](#)
- [Lydia Becomes a Christian](#)
- [A Jailer Becomes a Christian](#)
- [The Noble Bereans](#)
- [Paul Preaches in Athens-Mars Hill](#)

- [Priscilla and Aquila](#)
- [Paul's 3rd Journey- Ephesus](#)
- [Eutychus Falls from a Window](#)
- [Paul Goes to Jerusalem](#)
- [Paul's Nephew Uncovers a Plot](#)
- [Paul's Trial](#)
- [Paul's Shipwreck](#)
- [Paul Writes Letters from Prison](#)

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "A Jailer Becomes a Christian" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "A Jailer Becomes a Christian" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

[top](#)

## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Visual aid and other ideas for telling the story \(kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)
- [1 minute 26 second video called "The Fresh Jailor of Philipi" telling the story to the tune of "Fresh Prince of Belair".](#)
- [Craft: Make handcuffs and chains from paper towel roll and string. Youtube video \(1 minute and 2 seconds\).](#)
- [A good selection of puzzles and games to print \(gardenofpraise.com\)](#)

- [Craft: Video clip \(2 minutes and 30 seconds\) on how to make paper chains \(simplekidscrafts.com\)](#)
- [Craft: Video clip \(1 minute and 32 seconds\) showing how to make Paul's basket from an egg carton, string and pencil \(Youtube\)](#)
- [Craft: Pop-up book about salvation \(biblesongsandmore.wordpress.com\)](#)
- [Review: Create a "passport" that covers the life of Paul. Good visual ideas and activities. Could be split up to go with several lessons or taught all together as a review of previous lessons concerning Paul found \(kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)
- [Lesson: Lesson on Paul and Silas in prison with great ideas and printable visual aids. Links to reproducibles and worksheets at the bottom of the page \(kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)
- [Photographs of the site of historical Philippi \(bibleplaces.com\)](#)
- [Read more about Philippi at wikipedia.org\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/paul-2nd-journey/>  
[top](#)



©2011-2021 Mission Bible Class. Permission to use for personal or ministry purposes only. Not to be resold. [www.missionbibleclass.org](http://www.missionbibleclass.org)