



ACTS

Of All the Apostles

You Will Be My Witnesses:

Running the Race

Lesson 31



A Jailer is Freed

Acts 16:16-40

Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3
Romans 7:14-8:1
John 8:31-44

Memory Verse

If the Son gives you
freedom, you are free!
John 8:36 (CEV)

Lesson Goals

- Understand that Paul and Silas were chained in jail
- Understand that the jailer believed
- Understand that Jesus is the way to be free from sin

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

When you are running a race and trying to learn a new technique, what usually happens? The more you think about running the right way, you run the wrong way. Have you ever kept doing something you shouldn't? Maybe you even wished you could stop, but the more you tried the worse it got. That is the nature of sin. It enslaves you (makes you its slave). If it makes us its slave, then how do we get free? Let's look at the race being run by Paul and his companions to see what we can learn from them.

One day while Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke were still in Philippi, they headed to the river to the place of prayer where they had met Lydia. Someone was following them. It was a female slave. "She had a spirit that helped her to tell ahead of time what was going to happen. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes." (Acts 16:16 NIV) As she followed them around, she shouted, "These men serve the Most High God. They are telling you how to be saved." (Acts 16:17 NIV) She did this for a few days until Paul became upset. Then Paul spoke to the spirit that was in her, "'In the name of Jesus Christ,' he said, 'I command you to come out of her!'" At that very moment the spirit left her." (Acts 16:18 NIV) Needless to say, the men who were making money from her were mad. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the market square. They told lies about them and stirred up the crowd. The judges in Philippi went along with the crowd. They "ordered that Paul and Silas be stripped and beaten. They were whipped without mercy. Then they were thrown into prison." (Acts 16:22-23 NIV) The jailer put them in the deepest part of the prison and chained their feet.

But at midnight, Paul and Silas could be heard praying. That's not all; they could also be heard singing hymns to God. Even though Paul and Silas were chained, their spirits were free. Then "suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. It shook the prison from top to bottom. All at once the prison doors flew open. Everybody's chains came loose." (Acts 16:26 NIV) The jailer even woke up! When he saw that the doors were all opened he was afraid. He thought that all of the prisoners had escaped. Do you remember what happened to the guards in a Jerusalem prison when the angel freed Paul to escape? They were put to death. This jailer had reason to be afraid. You see, even though he wasn't chained, he wasn't free. But as he was about to hurt himself Paul

Application

We started our lesson with a question about whether you have ever been in a situation where you can't seem to do the right thing, no matter how hard you try. That is what sin is like; it enslaves us. We read in John 8:34 that "Everyone who sins is a slave of sin." Before we know Christ, we are sinners. Sinning is what we do. John chapter eight also explains that a life of sin shows who we belong to - the devil.

So what do we do? How do we get free? Romans 5:8 makes it very clear that while we were still sinning, Christ died for us. He made the way for us before we even knew to look for a way out. Are you ready for a way out of the life of sin you are in? Turn to Christ today!

shouted out, "Don't hurt yourself. We are all here!"

When the jailer could get some lights, he ran to Paul and Silas. He was still afraid. "He fell down in front of Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out. He asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" (Acts 16:29-30 NIV) They answered him, "Believe in the Lord. Then you will be saved, you and your family." They told the jailer about Jesus and even had the opportunity to talk to some of his family members, too. They believed! Freedom! And even though it was late at night, "the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. Right away he and his whole family were baptized." (Acts 16:33 NIV) The jailer even took them to his own home. He served them something to eat. He and his family were so excited. "They had become believers in God." (Acts 16:34b NIV)

Early the next morning, the judges sent some men to the jail. They told the jailer to free Paul and Silas, but Paul refused. "'They beat us in public,' he said. 'We weren't given a trial. And we are Roman citizens! They threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and personally lead us out.'" (Acts 16:37 NIV) And they did. The judges came and apologized to Paul and Silas, but they also asked them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas got out of prison, they went straight to Lydia's house. They had been welcomed there before. "There they met with the believers. They told them to be brave. Then they left." (Acts 16:40 NIV)

Review

1. What happened to Paul and his companions in Philippi? (They removed an evil spirit from a slave girl.)
2. How did her owners respond? (They dragged Paul and Silas to the market square and had them arrested.)
3. What did Paul and Silas do in jail? (They prayed and they sang hymns to God.)
4. What happened after that, around midnight? (There was an earthquake.)
5. Did the prisoners escape? (No.)
6. What was the jailer's response? (He asked, "What must I do to be saved?")

Next Week
Thessalonica
Acts 17:1-9

Preschool Lesson

One day while Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke were still in Philippi, they headed to the river to the place of prayer where they had met Lydia. Someone was following them. It was a female slave. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes because there was a spirit in her.

She followed Paul and his friends around shouting, “These men serve the Most High God. They are telling you how to be saved.” (Acts 16:17 NIV) She did this for a few days until Paul became upset. Then Paul spoke to the spirit that was in her, “In the name of Jesus Christ, Leave her!” The spirit left her immediately.

The men who were making money from her were mad. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the market square. They told lies about them and stirred up the crowd. The judges in Philippi went along with the crowd. They ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten. Then they were thrown into prison. The jailer put them in the deepest part of the prison and chained their feet.

But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying. They were also singing songs to God. Then “suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. It shook the prison from top to bottom. All at once the prison doors flew open. Everybody’s chains came loose.” (Acts 16:26 NIV) The jailer even woke up! When he saw that the doors were all opened he was afraid. He thought that all of the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted out, “We are all here!”

The jailer ran to Paul and Silas. He was still afraid. He fell down in front of them and asked, “What should I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:29-30 NIV) They told him, “Believe in the Lord. Then you will be saved, you and your family.” They told the jailer about Jesus and even had the opportunity to talk to some of his family members, too. They believed! And even though it was late at night, “the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. Right away he and his whole family were baptized.” (Acts 16:33 NIV) The jailer even took them to his own home. He served them something to eat. He and his family were so excited. “They had become believers in God.” (Acts 16:34b NIV)

Activities

Memory Verse Activity - Write each word of the memory verse on strips of paper. Make a paper chain with the strips. Talk about the kind of freedom God gives.

Sing hymns. Talk about how hymns remind us of God's faithfulness.

Provide maps of Paul's Second Journey. Review the lesson and use the map to find each place that Paul and his companions traveled through or stopped at. If you are still using a wall-sized map, mark these on that map, as well, with a different color.

Make sack puppets of the Philippian jailer, Paul, and Silas. Reenact the lesson.

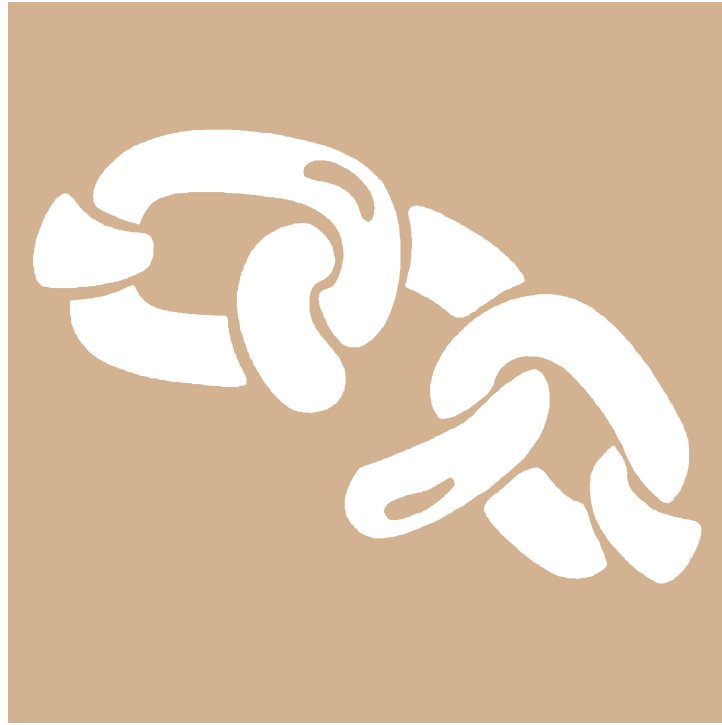
Illustrate today's lesson on cardstock. Instead of drawing bars on the picture, string yarn vertically through parallel holes that have been punched across the top and bottom of each picture.

Create a rhyme of the lesson or make up a song to a familiar tune.

Create a booklet or cartoon strip of the main events of the lesson.

Read John 8:31-44. Talk about slavery to sin vs freedom in Christ.

As you continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-3, focus on the first verse, especially "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Make time for personal reflection. Encourage your students to approach God for forgiveness and the freedom He offers.

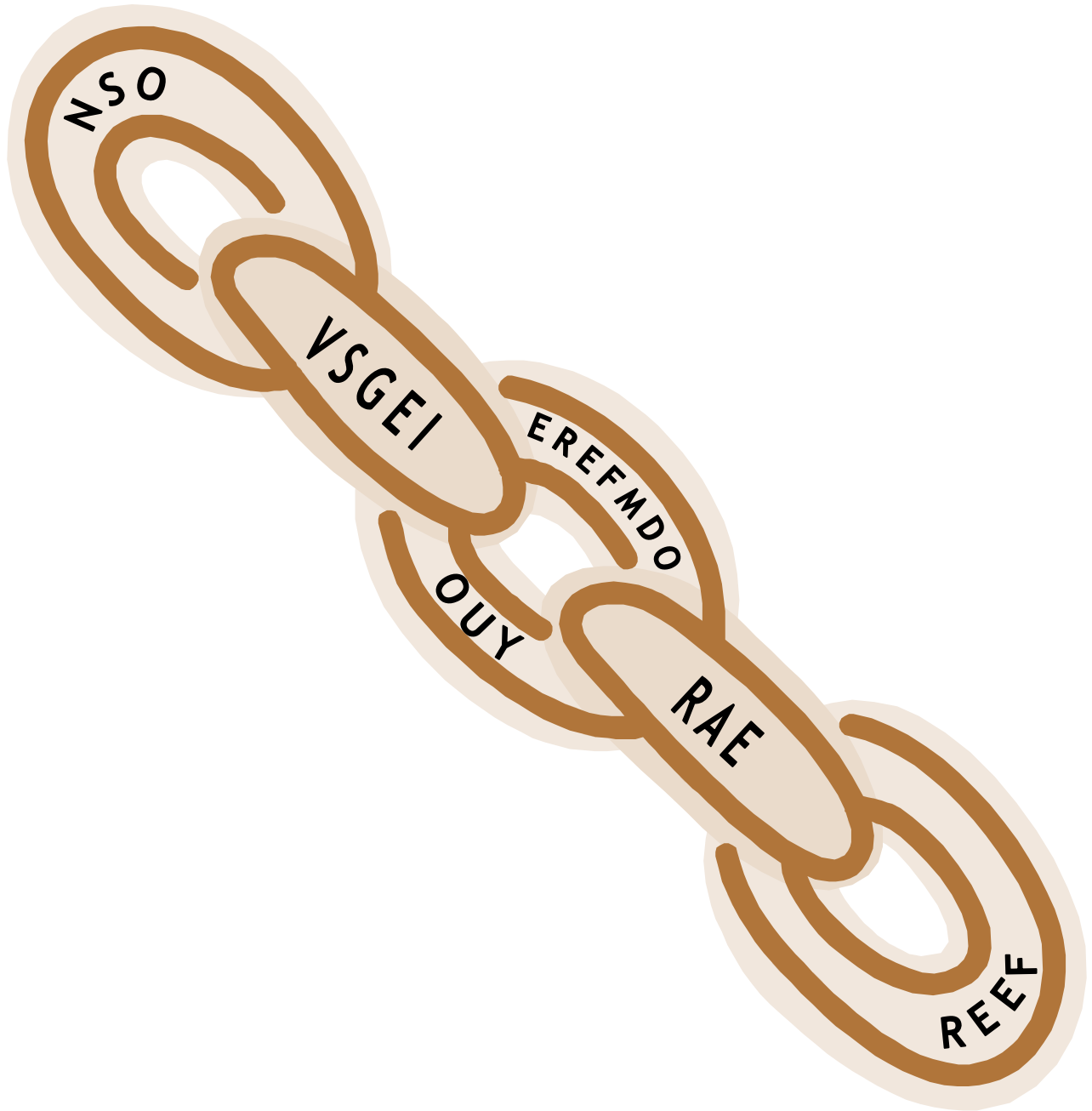


If the Son
gives you freedom,
you are free!

John 8:36

Racing Riddles

Unscramble the words below to complete the memory verse.

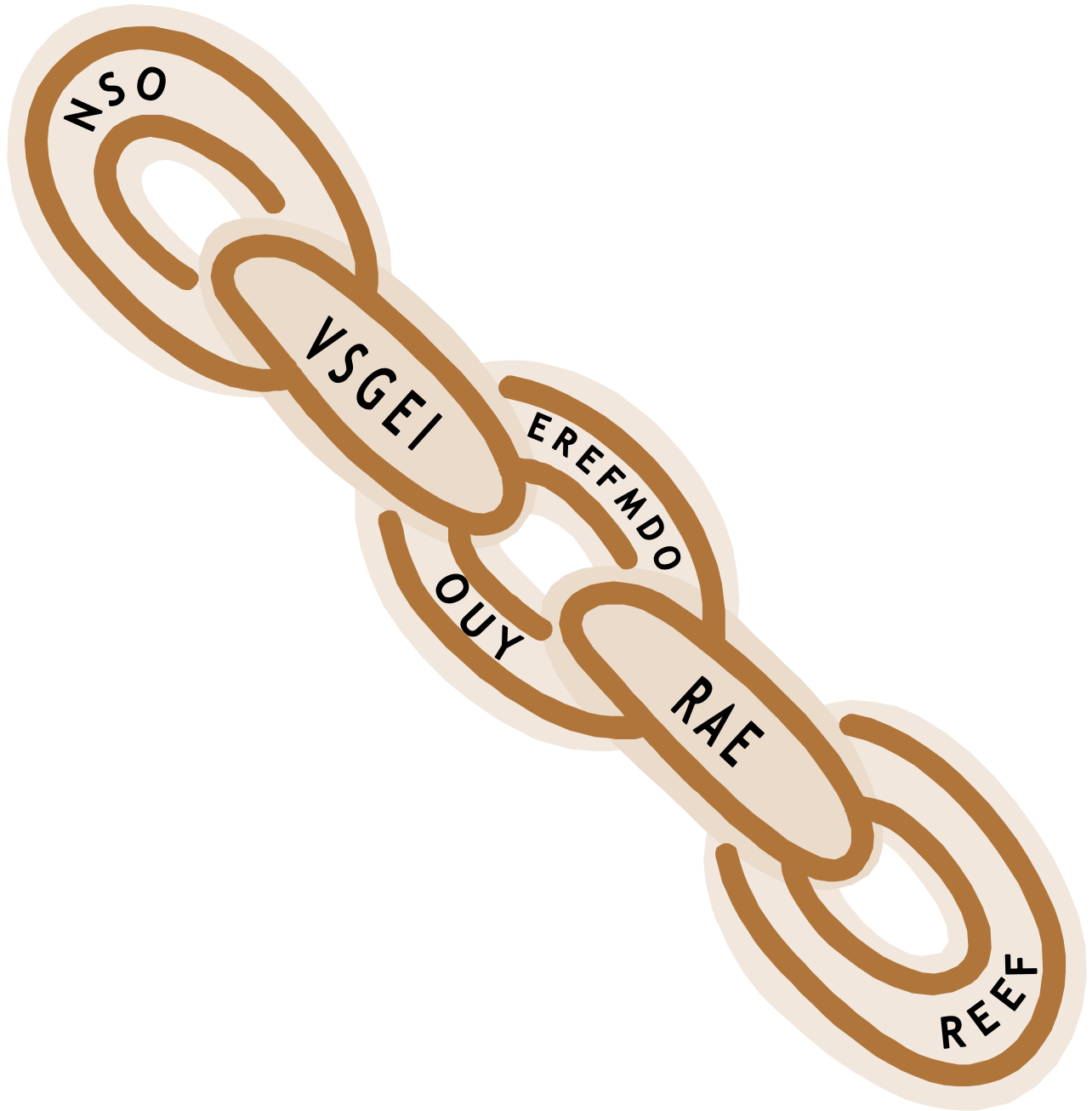


If the _____ you _____, _____!

John 8:36

Racing Riddles

Unscramble the words below to complete the memory verse.



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John 8:36

Word Search

m i d n i g h t e b w e p s m
u a s o c w h i p p e d i e a
g s r s h a m e a i k y l v r
n i l i a h t a b l a r l e k
a h n r i l o n r m u i i i e
s t s p n a i r a u q s h l t
d o y h e a h s r a h e p e s
n m r i d d e e d i t r h b q
a i s l f d r n l n r i s y u
d t c i e m l e n b a d i l a
e h r p e l b n a i e l l i r
y t i p t t h y p m o u u m e
a s e v e i l e b r e l i a j
r r e l l e t e n u t r o f p
p h i l i p p i t y l i m a f

Philippi

Paul and Silas

fortune teller

market square

whipped

prison

chained feet

midnight

prayed and sang

earthquake

jailer believes

family believes

Word Search

m i d n i g h t e b w e p s m
u a s o c w h i p p e d i e a
g s r s h a m e a i k y l v r
n i l i a h t a b l a r l e k
a h n r i l o n r m u i i i e
s t s p n a i r a u q s h l t
d o y h e a h s r a h e p e s
n m r i d d e e d i t r h b q
a i s l f d r n l n r i s y u
d t c i e m l e n b a d i l a
e h r p e l b n a i e l l i r
y t i p t t h y p m o u u m e
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