

8

The Contented Prisoner

Service
We follow Jesus' example by serving others.

POWER TEXT

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

KEY REFERENCES

- Acts 28:16-31
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 43, pp. 447-460
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 125-127; 135-142; 157-160
- Student story on page 92 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 17, Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
- No. 11, Growing in Christ
- No. 12, The Church

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that we can serve God no matter what our circumstance.
- **Feel** committed to serving others even under difficult circumstances.
- **Respond** by choosing to serve others at all times.

POWERPOINT

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

While Paul is placed under house arrest in Rome, he finds ways to share God's love with others, including his guards. He answers people's questions and shares with them the teachings of Jesus.

This is a lesson about service.

We can minister to others no matter what our circumstances. Wherever we go to school, or wherever we live, there are people who desperately need to know how much God loves them. It is a privilege to follow Jesus in a life of service.

Teacher Enrichment

"[Paul's] enemies could hope for success only in seeking . . . to influence the emperor. . . . Delay would further their object. . . .

"In the providence of God this delay resulted in the furtherance of the gospel. . . . [Paul] was permitted to dwell in a commodious house, where he could meet freely with his friends and also present the truth daily to those who came to hear. Thus for two years he continued his labors, 'preaching . . . and teaching' " (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 453).

"Those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 78).

Where in my daily life can I share God's love in a practical way? How can I reveal God to my neighbors? coworkers? mail carrier?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	A. Poor Paul B. Disadvantaged	chair Bibles, chalk/whiteboard, pens/pencils, paper, markers/chalk
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 87. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, gift box, prayer chain materials
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story Experiencing the Story Exploring the Bible	five copies of *Net Kids* script (p. 153) white/chalkboard, markers/chalk Bibles, chalk/whiteboard, markers/chalk
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Report*	
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*Trying It**	baskets, fruit and/or cookies
* Closing		A. Prayer and closing comments B. Reminder to parents C. Coming up next week	

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

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READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

YOU NEED:
- ☐ chair

Poor Paul

Choose one student to sit in a chair in the front and a second student to try to make the first student smile. The second student is not allowed to touch the person in the chair or to say anything other than "Poor (Paul or Pauline)." Take turns with as many students as you have time for. Time each set of students to see who is able to last the longest.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel to try to keep a straight face in the circumstances you faced?** (Quite difficult. Would have been easy if no one had been bothering me.) **How difficult do you think it would be to serve others if you were facing serious difficulties or challenges yourself?** (Quite difficult. Wouldn't feel like it.) **Let's say together our power text, Philippians 4:11-13,**

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Say: **Our power point this week is:**

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

B

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ chalk/whiteboard
- ☐ pens/pencils
- ☐ paper
- ☐ markers/chalk

Disadvantaged

Copy the power text on the board. Distribute paper and pens/pencils. Ask the students to copy the text using the hand they **do not** write with. Have them display their work when finished.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel trying to write with the other hand? How would you feel if you thought you had to do something like this every day? How is this like the Christian life?** (The devil bothers us and tries to get us to quit trusting in God's strength.)

Say: **Let's say together our power text, Philippians 4:11-13,**

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Say: **Even though at times we feel we are unable to do something, there is always a way with God's help.**

As our power point reminds us,

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

Prayer & Praise

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"Shepherd of My Soul" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 99)
"We Are His" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 140)
"Hey, Mon" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 138)

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Use Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ gift box

Say: **By giving an offering, we are choosing to serve others, even though we don't know them personally. We can serve long distance when we support the work of our church around the world.**

Prayer

YOU NEED:
- ☐ prayer-chain materials

Say: **Being a Christian is not easy. Sometimes one of the most difficult things we have to do is to forgive others. Today as you do your link on the prayer chain, think about asking God to give you forgiveness for someone who has wronged you.**

Invite students to voice prayer requests, answers to prayer, and praises. Record their answers on colored strips of papers and add them to the prayer chain if you already have one in the Sabbath School class. Otherwise, start making a prayer chain. Ask a student volunteer to pray over the requests, answers to prayer, and praises that are listed on the prayer chain. Close by praying for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

Notes

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- five copies of *Net Kids* script (p. 153)

Introducing the Bible Story

***The* Net Kids**

The *Net Kids* are an imaginative way to introduce the Bible story. If you prefer not to use this imaginary element, read over the script yourself and introduce the lesson concept in your own words. (Refer to Lesson 1 for background and setup information.)

Make five copies of the *Net Kids* script found on page 153 of this guide. Distribute to the students you have selected as early as possible. Allow practice time before using this activity.

Present the skit.

Debriefing

Say: **Today we'll continue our story of how Paul made the best of a bad situation and used it to serve others. Our power point is:**

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

YOU NEED:
- white/chalkboard
- markers/chalk

Experiencing the Story

Have student volunteers read Acts 28:16-31. Choose two or three students to take turns reading the parts spoken by Paul, another one or two to read the narration, and the rest to read the part of the Jews in Rome. Point out when the parts change.

Say: **As we have been reading, I have identified at least six possible ways in which Paul served others during his time in Rome. Look over the verses we just read and see if you can find them. I will list them as you call them out.**

As students find and call out responses, list them where all can see. (Six ways: witnessing to the soldier, making the first move to talk with the Jews, arranging to explain the gospel to the Jews, issuing a message of warning to the Jews when they rejected Christ as the Messiah, welcoming all his visitors, preaching the gospel of the kingdom from where he was.)

Debriefing

Ask: **What difficult circumstances did Paul face as he served?** (He was chained to a guard 24 hours a day. He was already facing a trial that could cost him his life. He was ill.) **How much would you feel like serving others if you faced similar circumstances? What would be the only way you could accomplish that type of service?** (through God's strength, through the Holy Spirit)

Say: **Our power point this week is:**

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ chalk/whiteboard
- ☐ markers/chalk

Exploring the Bible

Have the students, in groups, look up the following passages and identify the principle of service contained in each one. Have someone write the principles where all can see.

Matthew 16:25 (The purpose of living)

Matthew 23:11, 12 (Service leads to greatness)

Matthew 20:27; Luke 22:24-27 (Characteristics of a servant leader)

Philippians 2:2-5 (A cure for selfishness)

Debriefing

Ask: **Do you know anyone who seems to have the principle of service at work in their lives?** (Give students a chance to tell who, and why they think so.) **What would it take for you to be that type of person?** (Stay connected to God because only He can give us the ability to love and serve others unconditionally.) **Let's say together our power text, Philippians 4:11-13,**

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Remember:

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

Report

Ask for a specific report from each of the students who were dismissed early last week to do simple acts of service between Sabbath School and church service. Ask for reports from those who chose to serve others later. Discuss successes and failures, focusing on how they overcame any obstacles that made it difficult for them to serve.

Ask: **How did God help you overcome any difficulties and challenges? What did you learn from your experiences?**

Remember:

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ baskets
- ☐ fruit
- ☐ cookies

*Trying It**

Ask students to share how they have served others in spite of challenges during the past week. Ask: **Did you have a chance to do something nice for someone who treated you unfairly or who has falsely accused you? How did you serve God and others in spite of difficult circumstances?**

Announce to the class that you have baskets of fruit and/or cookies, and that you need some servants to serve the treats to royalty.

Say: **I need some volunteers to be the servants, and some volunteers to be the royalty. Those who choose to be servants will serve the treats (not eating any), and those who choose to be royalty will be served the treats.** (If no one volunteers to be a servant, have the adults in the room serve them.)

Debriefing

Read Luke 22:27 to the students. Encourage discussion with the following questions.

Ask: **Why is being a servant not a desirable thing for most people? Who is greater—the servant or the person being served? Why did Jesus come as a servant? How will serving others in any circumstances affect our lives and the lives of those we serve?** (Finish by giving some fruit and cookies to the servants, and say that service to others will be rewarded in God's kingdom.)

Say: **Remember:**

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Ask God to give each of you a burden to serve others as He did.

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **Jesus says, "Go into all the world." It is our privilege to share with others what Jesus has done for us.**

Notes

Student lesson

The Contented Prisoner

Have you ever wondered, How much worse can things get? *And then you decided you would just make the best of it. Were you able to see God at work, even in your bad circumstances? Continue learning about Paul who chose to serve God while still a prisoner, and the wonderful results of his commitment.*

On arriving in Rome

I overheard Julius, the Roman centurion escorting us, tell Paul that he would release him if he could. Paul told him he wouldn't change anything, because God had a work for him to do in Rome. He said he was *content* with that. His positive attitude continues to amaze me.

Once we were in the city, Julius made arrangements for Paul to live in his own house with one guard rather than stay at the imperial prison with the other prisoners. He found us a furnished house. At last Paul can live in a little comfort. He will be under house arrest. That means he will be constantly chained to a soldier. But he can freely preach to all who come through the door.

Three days later

Paul had inquired about the Jewish community here in Rome when he arrived. He discovered that there was once again a large population of Jews. He sat reminiscing about his friends Priscilla and Aquila, whom he had met when they were banished from Rome years before. He repeated his belief that you can serve Christ anywhere under any circumstances. I had to agree with him.

Today Paul decided it was time to meet with the Jewish leaders. He wanted to make sure they got the truth about what had happened in Jerusalem. When they arrived, he stated carefully and simply the reason for his imprisonment. He was surprised that they hadn't already heard the details from the Jews in Jerusalem.

They were curious about his belief that the Messiah had come. Instead of having to answer questions about his arrest, he was asked to explain to them why he thought Jesus was the Messiah. Paul asked them to meet with him again in two days.

Two days later

Paul stated boldly to the Jews that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the Messiah whom the prophets wrote about. The Roman Jews asked thoughtful questions. Some believed, but in the end, most were unconvinced. Paul reminded them of Isaiah's prophecy about their unbelief (Isaiah 6:9, 10). Finally he said that salvation would go to the Gentiles. It didn't seem to matter to most of these people listening to him. I could tell Paul was disappointed. The important thing was that he used every opportunity to tell what he knew. As he sat there in chains, he said that regardless of the circumstances, he would preach Christ.

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength," he said (Philippians 4:12, 13).

I glanced at the soldier guarding him and saw that even he was moved by Paul's testimony.

Two years later

The Jews from Jerusalem arrived today. Their delay in coming has allowed the work to blossom everywhere. Paul has had time to write letters of encouragement to the churches he established. He has sent workers to these churches as well as to places he was not able to go.

A leader in chains. I now understand why Paul said two years ago that he was content in any circumstance, no matter how difficult. I have seen our Lord strengthen him for the work, even though his health is feeble.

Timothy, Mark, Demas, and Tychicus have been staying with us. Mark has made a dramatic turnaround. He has matured in the Lord very well. And he is completely devoted to Paul.

We have had a steady stream of visitors to this house. Heads of state probably don't receive as many people! If I didn't insist that he stop and rest, Paul would talk with people all night, every night!

After I repeated it once again today, he looked at me as if he wanted to argue. Instead he said, "You've been more than a physician—you've been a faithful friend." Lately he's been introducing me as "my beloved physician." I've been grateful for the time with him these past years. I've learned so much about trusting God and continuing to serve Him in spite of the difficulties.

KEY REFERENCES

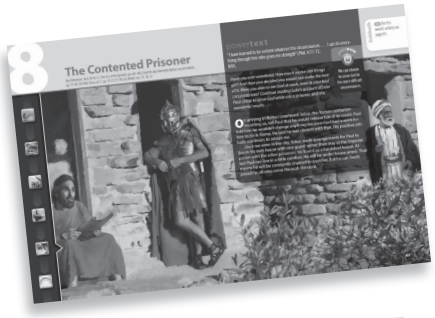
- Acts 28:16-31
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 43, pp. 447-460
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 125-127; 135-142; 157-160
- Our Beliefs nos. 17, 11, 12

POWER TEXT

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

POWER POINT

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.







Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 61.

Sunday

READ Read Acts 28:14, 15 and this week's story, "The Contented Prisoner."

REVIEW Review the power text.

THINK In your Bible study journal, write out or tell the story from the guard's perspective.

PRAY Pray that you'll serve God in all circumstances.

Monday

READ Read Acts 28:16-20.

THINK Think what it must have been like to be falsely accused, as Paul was.

DO Do something nice for someone who has falsely accused you or has treated you unkindly.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that you'll always want to do good to others.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 28:21-23.

THINK Think of Paul who was under house arrest and probably chained to a Roman guard.

REACT Would you feel like doing things for others while you were "chained"? Do you think Paul could have used being chained as an excuse not to serve others?

APPLY Make it your goal to do something kind for someone especially if it requires you to sacrifice something or to put up with difficulties.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for a humble heart to recognize opportunities to serve those who need your help most.

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 28:24-28.

TALK Talk with an adult about the verses quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10. Why do some believe and others don't?

REACT What can you do to help those who don't believe in God's Word to come to an understanding of it?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you serve even the ungrateful.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 28:30, 31.

THINK Are there any situations in your life that make it seem impossible to serve others?

APPLY Try to apply the principle of the power point this week when you encounter a challenging situation.

PLAN Plan ways to serve in difficult circumstances.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Praise God that He will help you serve Him even in difficult circumstances.

Friday

READ Read Philippians 4:11-13.

THINK Think about how you can apply these words in your own life.

CREATE Alone, or at family worship, make a wall hanging of the verses you just read.

SHARE Discuss what these words mean to each member of the family.

SAY Repeat the power text from memory.

PRAY Renew your commitment to Jesus and decide to serve Him wherever He calls you.