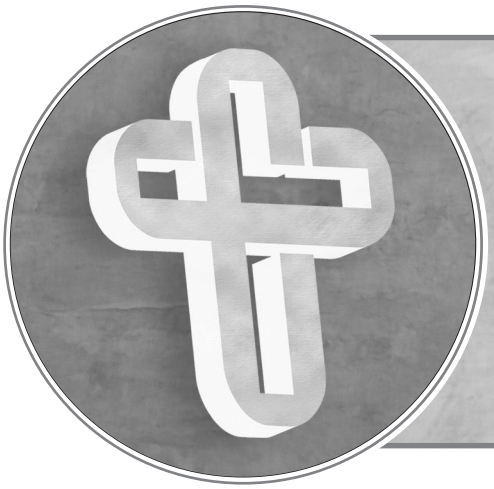


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY 21 2026

evidence of conversion

Scripture Story: Acts 12:1-23; 1 Peter; 2 Peter.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 15, 51, 52.
Key Text: 2 Peter 1:3.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jesus' first words to Simon Peter were "Come, follow me" (Mark 1:17, NIV). His final words to him were "You must follow me" (John 21:22, NIV). In between those commands Peter's colorful life flourishes with essential life lessons for all who would strive to follow Jesus.

Peter was a fisherman when he first met Jesus. That encounter with Jesus radically redefined the trajectory of Peter's life. Jesus gave Peter a new name—the "rock." But more than that Jesus gave him a new life. Peter was certainly never perfect, but he was transformed into the character of Christ. Peter gave his life to proclaim the good news of a risen Christ. He was the recognized leader among Jesus' disciples. He was the first great voice to share the gospel during and after Pentecost. He most likely knew Mark and gave him information for the Gospel of Mark. And finally, he wrote the books of 1 and 2 Peter.

This lesson focuses on Peter. Given the colorful stories, engaging personality, and personal writings of Peter, there are many directions you could take this study. The primary story of this lesson recounts the deliverance of Peter from prison. Thus the emphasis of this lesson will be on miracles and the miraculous. Intertwined in the narrative are lessons about grace and love. For when Jesus chooses His followers, He isn't looking for perfect people; He is looking for real folk who can be changed by His love.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Hear the story of Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison. *(Know)*
- See Peter as a real person—marked by both success and failure. *(Feel)*
- Have an opportunity to respond to God's desire to perform miracles in them, just as He did in Peter. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, No. 10

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

As an alternate activity, use this scenario:

Assign students the following roles from the story of Peter's deliverance from prison: Peter, two soldiers, an angel, two guards, believers who were gathered at Mary's house to pray, and Rhoda. Have the students act out the story as you read Acts 12:1-18.

Illustration

The Historical Setting of Peter's Letters: "The apostle writes what might be termed a circular letter addressed to 'strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.' These five areas included almost the whole of what is now called Asia Minor. The majority of the believers of these churches were Gentiles. Jewish Christians were in the minority. As their appointed missionary (Galatians 2:9), Peter was especially interested in the Jews, but he was not restricting his greetings and instruction to the minority group in these churches, as is indicated by his referring to his readers as formerly not of the people of God, and as converted idolaters (1 Peter 2:10; 4:3, 4). The apostle, who was the first to baptize Gentiles and to assert their equal status in the church, would no doubt regard all Christians, of both Jewish and Gentile origin, as one in Christ Jesus, without distinction in addressing them.

"The precise date of the writing of this epistle cannot be determined. The letter was written probably from Rome, as the name 'Babylon' suggests (see chap. 5:13). This would mean that it was written near the end of the apostle's life (see Vol. VI, pp. 34, 35). The absence of any reference to Peter's presence in Rome in Paul's letters from that city suggests that Peter did not arrive there until 'about the time of Paul's final arrest' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 537), about A.D. 66 (see Vol. VI, pp. 101-107). Although nothing definite can be said regarding the date of 1 Peter, the foregoing suggests as a likely date the middle of the sixties of the first century. The epistle reflects the existence of an unfriendly attitude toward Christians (chaps. 2:12; 4:12-16). This may suggest the time of Nero's persecution, which began in A.D. 64 (see Vol. VI, pp. 81-84)" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 7, pp. 547, 548).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Keep this historical context in mind when you read 1 and 2 Peter as well as the stories of Peter in the book of Acts. It was a time of severe persecution when Christians were fed to half-starved lions for sport. Most Christians were running for their lives, just praying to survive. Because of Peter's unique relationship to Jesus, as well as his own story of imprisonment and persecution, his voice rings a credible call to remain faithful to God—no matter the circumstances.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- **Acts 12:1-23—**What is the most unbelievable story of a miracle that you have ever heard? How does it compare to the story of Peter's escape from prison? Why do you think God freed Peter? In verse 17 who is the "James" that Peter is talking about (see Galatians 1:18, 19)? Why would Peter mention him specifically? Why do you think that God allowed James to die (Acts 12:2-11) and yet miraculously saved Peter?

  Reflect: What "jail" in your life are you praying that God would help you to escape? In your mind, would God's deliverance for you be any less miraculous than it was for Peter? Why or why not?
- **1 Peter—**Suffering through the "painful trial" (see 1 Peter 4:12), Christians were hurting. Picture the dispersed Christians who are being hunted. Imagine Sister Martha or Brother Nicodemus holed up in some hovel with other believers. Their lives are endangered, and when you're dealing with someone who is on the brink of death, you don't talk about trivial matters. You talk about life and death stuff. You concentrate on what really matters. Scan through the book of 1 Peter and find passages that illustrate the life-and-death nature of Peter's message.
- **2 Peter—**The theme of 2 Peter varies from that

of 1 Peter. The second letter addresses the issue of laxity in the church—which comes as a result of defective doctrine. For example, one of the stalwart teachings in question centered on the Second Coming. "Where is this 'coming'?" the scoffers asked. "Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4, NIV). Peter answers: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (verse 9, NIV). Scan through the book of 2 Peter and identify other doctrines that were being challenged.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to help sort out some of the characters in the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

- **Herod Agrippa I—**"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church . . ." (Acts 12:1, NIV). Four generations of the Herod dynasty are mentioned in the Bible: Herod the Great murdered the children at the time of Jesus' birth; Herod Antipas was involved in Jesus' trial and John the Baptist's death; Herod Agrippa I murdered the apostle James and is the ruler referred to in Acts 12; and finally, Herod Agrippa II was one of Paul's judges.

  Herod Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Herodias—the woman responsible for the death of John the Baptist) enjoyed modest favor among the Jews because his grandmother (Miriamne) was Jewish. Although as a young man he had been imprisoned by Tiberias, he was later trusted by Rome and assigned the governorship of most of Palestine. His fatal error came while on a visit to Caesarea when the people called him a god and he accepted their praise. "Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

Education theorists suggest that learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Superior learning is collaborative and social rather than competitive and isolated. This principle rings true in the traditional classroom; it is also true in the Sabbath School setting. Working with others tends to heighten involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' perspectives focuses concentration and deepens understanding. So, as much as possible in your context, encourage reciprocity and cooperation among your students.

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite students to share the Key Text *with the class if they have committed it to memory.*
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Acts of the Apostles. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23, NIV). Like his grandpa, uncle, and son after him, Herod Agrippa I was exposed to truth, but he would not accept it. Religion was important only as it bolstered his political aspirations.

- **Mary the Mother of John Mark—**"When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying" (Acts 12:12, NIV). Scholars suggest that Mary's home was the headquarters of the Christian church. It has also been suggested that it was in Mary's home where Jesus and His disciples partook of the Last Supper. Notice that in this story, her home served as a meeting place for the believers to pray. When they faced impossible odds, they turned to God for help.
- **John Mark—**John Mark, more commonly referred to as Mark, wrote the Gospel of Mark. He was a helpful companion to three influential leaders in the early church—Barnabas, Paul, and Peter. The material in his Gospel is primarily attributed to Peter. Mark's role as an assistant seems to have served him well as an astute observer. He listened to Peter's stories about Jesus over and over and was one of the first to put these accounts into writing.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Refer to a story in the news that some interpret as a miracle. Discuss whether or not our interpretation of events taints our understanding of miracles. Compare and contrast these modern-day miracles with the miracles in the life of Peter.

Summary

Points for closing discussion:

- Share a story from your life where you knew "the hand of God" was at work.
- Do you suppose that miracles are happening all around us—every day—that we miss?
- What is the most important lesson that we can learn from the life of Peter?

Reminder to Teacher: Global Youth Day is the third Sabbath in March. Have you started planning your Global Youth Day Service activity with your students?



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 15, 51, 52.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 21 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Acts 12:1-23; 1 Peter; 2 Peter.
Commentary: The *Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 15, 51, 52.

evidence of conversion



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

(2 Peter 1:3, NIV)

flashlight

"It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and entire reliance upon divine power, that he received his call to act as an undershepherd. Christ had said to Peter, before his denial of Him, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' Luke 22:32. These words were significant of the wide and effectual work which this apostle was to do in the future for those who should come to the faith. For this work, Peter's own experience of sin and suffering and repentance had prepared him. Not until he had learned his weakness, could he know the believer's need of dependence on Christ" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 515).

what do you think?

Below are a few statements of miracles, grace, and love. Which ones do you believe completely? (Circle these.) Which ones do you have doubts about? (Put a question mark by these.)

a. I believe in miracles.
b. Every life is a miracle.
c. Miracles occur more for people of faith.
d. Grace is impossible to fully grasp.
e. I am 100 percent positive that I am saved by grace.
f. I believe that God loves all people equally.
g. I believe that only people filled with the Holy Spirit are capable of fully loving others.

did you know?

Most scholars believe that First and Second Peter were both written by the apostle Peter. He addressed the letters to Jewish Christians throughout Asia Minor who were being persecuted for their faith. First Peter is a message of comfort and encouragement to remember that through all the suffering in this world Jesus offers hope. While he wrote his first letter to teach about prevailing through persecution (external trials), he wrote the second letter to teach about handling heresy in the church (internal trials).

INTO THE STORY

"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

"The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

"Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

"Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.'

"When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, 'Peter is at the door!'

"'You're out of your mind,' they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, 'It must be his angel.'

"But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison."

(Acts 12:1-17, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the passages in the Into the Story *section and answer the following questions:*

What is the irony in verses 13-15?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How much faith did the believers at that prayer meeting really have?

_____
_____
_____

If you were a defense attorney, how would you defend these Christians?

_____
_____
_____

How might the scene of Peter's knocking at the door and their reluctance to believe it was Peter be impacted by the detail provided in verse 2?

_____
_____
_____

What part did their prayers play in Peter's escape? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think God chose to perform a miracle on behalf of Peter?

_____
_____
_____

What does this suggest about Peter's importance to the early Christian church?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News" **(Philippians 1:27, NLT).**

"Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me" **(Psalm 71:18, NLT).**

"But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God" **(Acts 20:24, NLT).**

"Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn't repented of their sins and turned to God" **(Matthew 11:20, NLT).**

"Who can list the glorious miracles of the Lord? Who can ever praise him enough?" **(Psalm 106:2, NLT).**

further insight

"Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God's children from the dross of earthliness. . . . Trials and obstacles are His chosen methods of discipline, and His appointed conditions of success."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 524

Sabbath

Read Psalm 106:2.

Review the statements in the *What Do You Think?* section that you have questions about. Review each one and write next to it why you question it.

Sunday

Read Acts 20:24.

Think about all the stories you know of the apostle Peter—walking on the water, denying Christ, asking Jesus to drench his entire body at the Lord's Supper, and so on. Next, read through First and Second Peter. Scan the book of Acts, looking for additional stories about Peter. Finally, read the story of Peter's escape from prison in the Into the Story section. What are three lessons that you can take from Peter's life that can be of help to you? Write them below.

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read 2 Peter 1:3.

Review the *Key Text*. Make a list of everything you need. Next, claim the promise contained in the Key Text and believe that God will do as He says and meet all your needs.

_____

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Matthew 11:20.

Review the *Flashlight* section and reflect on these questions:

Why do you think Peter first had to be "led to self-renunciation" before receiving his call from God?

_____

_____

_____

Does Jesus' statement in Luke 22:32 suggest that Peter was not converted when he was a disciple of Jesus? What must happen for genuine conversion to take place?

_____

_____

_____

What do you think God is preparing you to do through your "experience of sin and suffering and repentance"?

_____

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Circle the verse that speaks especially to your life today. Why is this verse meaningful to you? Think about somebody who might be encouraged by the same verse and pass it along by sending an e-mail, a text message, or a good old-fashioned hand-addressed note in the mail.

Thursday

Read Psalm 71:18.

How am I "advancing by faith toward the heights of Christian perfection"?

"For many years Peter had been urging upon the believers the necessity of a constant growth in grace and in a knowledge of the truth; and now, knowing that soon he would be called to suffer martyrdom for his faith, he once more drew attention to the precious privileges within the reach of every believer. In the full assurance of his faith the aged disciple exhorted his brethren to steadfastness of purpose in the Christian life. 'Give diligence,' he pleaded, 'to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Precious assurance! Glorious is the hope before the believer as he advances by faith toward the heights of Christian perfection!" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 533).

What do you think Ellen White means by "Christian perfection"?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Philippians 1:27.

What can I learn about miracles from Peter?

_____

_____

_____

Do you believe that the same miracles (walking on the water, escaping prison, healing the crippled beggar, etc.) that Peter experienced could happen to you? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

If the only story in the Bible that you knew was the story of Peter, how would you finish this sentence?

Love is: _____

_____

_____

_____

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 15, 51, 52.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.