

OLD HABITS

PETER'S MIRACULOUS ESCAPE FROM PRISON

King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. 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.

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 sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

He went where many people had gathered and were praying. "Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl 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. Acts 12:1-16

2. Imagine that you were at the prayer meeting when Rhoda announced (without opening the door) that

- "Peter is at the door!" What would you have said? "You're out of your mind!"
 "Well, let him in!" "It must be Peter's guardian angel."
 "Just as I expected!" "Praise God! My prayers have been answered!"

3. When has God surprised you by intervening in an "imprisoning" situation you thought was hopeless?

4. In your school, what is the most common addiction? alcohol drugs
 food / weight control tobacco exercise TV / movies spending / gambling
 sex / pornography anger / violence work / achievement other:

5. From your experience, what could you share to help someone who feels they are helplessly addicted?

6. What kinds of things do you find to be most imprisoning? habits / addictions
 bad relationships my desire for things school/work
 a stagnant spiritual life my impulses my fears
 my friends' expectations my parents' / spouse's expectations
 a health problem / physical limitation other:

7. What would most help you to find freedom from these things? an angel coming from heaven to take care of it all friends praying for me, and really believing it can happen
 my own confidence in God's ability to help me my own desire to change
 So who wants to change-a prison is a secure place!

8. What can this group do to help you be free? leave me alone pray for me
 let me know "I'm okay" hold me accountable call me to see how I'm doing
 share some of their own struggles help me to understand myself and to change other:

9. If you, like Peter, were arrested by a repressive government for being a Christian, what evidence would there be that you are "guilty"? What evidence would there be that you are "innocent"?

10. What is God saying to you through this study? How can the group pray for you?