

OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

YEAR: KNEEL / FOCUS: LIVING ON MISSION / SERIES: ACTS

BIG TRUTH: OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

1 Peter 3:15; Lamentations 3:21-24; Philippians 4:12; Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 3:12

BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 16:25

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

BIG IDEAS

- We live for Jesus.
- We disrupt the world with the Gospel.
- We suffer for the name of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE: ACTS 16:16-25

KNEEL: LIVING ON MISSION

The Kneel Year is an exploration of what it means to worship God with our all (Luke 10:26-28) and to use our influence to lead others to do the same. We know that as we pursue a life of worship, we will pursue a life of both wisdom and mission. Throughout this year we will study and pursue the wisdom of God through the book of Proverbs and the mission of God through the book of Acts, and we will learn how both of these things must inform and shape our influence as Jesus followers!

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- The gospel has the power to turn the world upside down.
- They are empowered and chosen to be a gospel witness in the world.
- Our salvation has come by grace alone.



Every student should feel...

- Comfort that the Lord is with them wherever they go.
- Hope in the God of salvation.
- Responsible to use their influence to live for Jesus alone.



Every student should strive to...

- Read, study, and meditate on the entire book of Acts.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Pray consistently for boldness to make Jesus known.



Every student should want...

- To pursue faithfulness in living on mission.
- To share the gospel with people in their lives who do not know Jesus.
- To sacrifice their personal freedoms for the sake of the gospel

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 16:25

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Our faith sustains us always.

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...”

- Paul and Silas faced many hardships. When they were imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, their faith offered them hope and encouragement. They did not despair. Instead, they sang and praised God for His faithfulness. Their faith was genuine, and it kept them from feeling despair in their time of trouble.
- Our faith will sustain us and keep us from feeling despair. When we face challenging and difficult times, we can turn our eyes to Christ and remember the work He has done. We can also remember that He is always with us and that we have eternal life with Him. This offers us hope and help in our greatest need.

Our faith keeps us focused on God.

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...”

- Paul and Silas were not singing praises to someone else or congratulating one another on their ability to think good thoughts. Instead, they were praising God. Their focus was on God and what He had done for them and the promise of their eternity.
- When we focus on God’s faithfulness, we can remain hopeful. This is our hope. God is faithful and His faithfulness and trustworthiness will always bring us hope in our time of greatest need.

Our faith helps us hope and witness to others.

“...and the prisoners were listening to them.”

- When Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, they were heard by the prisoners around them. Because of their faith and hope, they were witnesses to others.
- When we trust in God, our faith in Him is a witness to those around us. No one is an island, and our actions impact the people around us. As we practice our faith, it impacts the people around us.

OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN
OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**BIG IDEA #1: WE LIVE FOR JESUS.¹****[THIS]**

It's tempting to believe that our lives are for our own pleasure or gain. Because of our flesh nature, we believe that we are meant to be happy in this life. This leads us to believe that we are entitled to happiness and joy in this life. We wrongly believe that we should not face hardship, but instead, we should have good lives. Even as Christians, we buy the lie that we are supposed to have our best life here. What is true is that we are just sojourners here. We are not intended to live our best lives here on earth. This earth is fallen and broken. It is not our eternal home. God does not intend for us to live out our best lives here. Instead, we are to live for Christ and our eternal home. Paul and Silas lived this truth when they were imprisoned in Philippi. In Acts 16:25, they were in chains for preaching the gospel, yet they praised God because they were living for Jesus and not for themselves. They didn't expect to have an easy life. Instead, they expected to struggle in this world.

[THEREFORE]

How does our expectation that our earthly lives will be good keep us from sharing the Gospel with others?

In 1 John 4:4 and 2 Corinthians 12:9 we are reminded of the comfort and help we receive from God through our struggles. We should expect to struggle in this world, but we do so knowing that our eternal home will be without struggle. When we do not expect struggles, we choose to remain silent and don't share the Gospel out of fear.

[THIS]

The disciples in the early church are examples to us today of what it looks like to live for Jesus. They experienced great hardships for the sake of telling others about Jesus. When we live for Jesus today, we accept that we will struggle, we will face opposition, we will be oppressed, and we will be persecuted. We must even face and accept that we will not have our best life now. Instead, we will focus on Jesus and what He has done for us. This type of focus will help us rejoice in our times of persecution and suffering just as Paul and Silas did. When we think about who God is and what He has done, we will long for the day when we are with Him in our eternal home forever. This causes us to give up our earthly dreams and desires and instead, we put on the purpose and desires of God. We purpose to live for Jesus and to do His will no matter the cost to us.

[THEREFORE]

What are some earthly desires that you struggle to release? How can you release them today?

1 John 2:15-16 reminds us that love of the world is at odds with loving God and serving Him. We can release the things we love too much when we live out Romans 12:2. When we seek to conform ourselves to God's Word and His commands, we will live for Jesus and not this world.

What daily habits reveal that you are living for Jesus and not this world?

Jeremiah 29:13 tells us that we will seek God and we will find Him. When we set aside time each day to study God's Word and to be with Him, we will find Him. We will grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him. James 4:8 also reminds us that this is true. When we are daily seeking Him through His Word and prayer, we are revealing that we are living for Him and not this world.

1. Acts 16:25: Paul and Silas did not live for themselves. Even though they faced tribulation, they still praised God.

OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN
OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**BIG IDEA #2: WE DISRUPT THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL.²****[THIS]**

In Acts 16, we read the story of Paul and Silas as they travel through Philippi preaching the Gospel. In Acts 16:16-22, Paul and Silas encounter a slave girl who was possessed by a demon. They set her free of the demon and this prevented her owners from using her to make money as a fortune-teller. Because of this, her owners became angry, and Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the city. Luke records in his account of the events that Paul and Silas are arrested and taken to prison, but not before they are attacked by a crowd of angry people. Paul and Silas did indeed disturb the city by proclaiming the Gospel. They interrupted the wickedness that was occurring there by bringing the good news of Jesus Christ. The result was that the slave girl was set free, and the Gospel was proclaimed. Though this disrupted the world, it did not stop Paul and Silas from proclaiming the truth. They did not let their circumstances silence their proclamation of the Gospel.

[THEREFORE]

Read Acts 16:16-22. What type of faith did Paul and Silas have to give them such boldness in the face of opposition?

In these verses, we see that Paul and Silas did not even consider what the consequence of their actions might be. Paul commanded the demon to come out of the slave girl, setting her free and glorifying God. He didn't ponder how it might affect his life. His faith was in the power of the Gospel alone and he did not care that it disrupted the world around him.

[THIS]

When our hope is greater than our circumstances, we live like Paul and Silas. We live to proclaim the Gospel and we accept the consequences. Living this way means that we are like Paul and Silas. There are times we share the Gospel without considering the consequences to us and our lives. We share even if it means that we are imprisoned, ridiculed, or persecuted in some way. We do this because we are not living for our life in this world. Instead, we are living for our eternal home. Our hope is not in this life. It is in our eternal life. When we live this way, we care only about making Jesus known and we do not consider anything we lose in this world of significance compared to fulfilling that purpose. This is how Paul and Silas lived. This is how the early disciples of Christ lived. They gave up everything to make Him known.

[THEREFORE]

What are some ways you've seen the proclamation of the Gospel disrupt the world?

1 Corinthians 1:18 tells us that the message of the cross is folly to people who are perishing. When someone hears the Gospel, they either believe it or it seems foolish to them, and it can anger them. In these ways, it disrupts the world. The Gospel is transformative, and it changes the world around us because it changes lives.

How does a fear of the disruption the Gospel can cause lead you to not share it boldly?

When we know the Gospel turns the world upside down, we may be tempted to not share the truth for fear of the result it may cause. This fear can lead us to feel ashamed, but we should not. 1 Peter 4:16 and Luke 9:26 remind us that there is no room for shame where the Gospel is concerned.

2. Acts 16:19: Paul and Silas disrupted the world with the Gospel. They preached the Gospel and turned lives upside down because of it.

OUR HOPE IS GREATER THAN
OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**BIG IDEA #3: WE SUFFER FOR THE NAME OF JESUS.³****[THIS]**

The idea of suffering in this world is seen as the result of either some mistake we have made or some unfair situation. The thought that we would do something to bring suffering into our lives, like sharing the Gospel, seems really far-fetched to a lot of people. Because we wrongly believe that life on this earth is supposed to be good and free of sorrow, we believe that suffering shouldn't happen to us. This lie permeates our culture especially and keeps us from telling others about Jesus. Even more so, it keeps us from living out an authentic faith because this would bring suffering into our daily lives. No one enjoys suffering and Jesus doesn't call us to enjoy suffering for the sake of suffering. He calls us to embrace the truth about this world and what it means to be His disciple. Living for Him in this world means suffering for His sake. It's the same as saying that if we are going to live, we are going to breathe. When we accept this and walk in this truth, then we are willing to tell others who He is and we proclaim the Gospel because our hope is in more than this world.

[THEREFORE]

What views about suffering do you have now? How do you need to adjust those views to align with suffering for Jesus?

James 1:2-4 and 1 Peter 5:10 tell us how to view suffering. This may seem impossible, but when we embrace the truth that this world isn't our home, we can endure the suffering we face because our hope is in our eternal home.

[THIS]

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas suffered for the name of Jesus. They didn't suffer because of their stupid decisions or dumb actions. In Acts 16:25, they are in prison because they proclaimed the name of Jesus. They set captives free in His name. They told people about His saving power and the work He did on the cross. They were beaten for His sake, not because they had done anything wrong. All this they suffered for His sake and not their own. They did it and then they sang praises to Him and prayed to Him. Their hearts were not bitter or angry to Him. They did not regret their actions. Instead, they continued to hope in Him. When our hope is more than our circumstances, we will suffer for Jesus. This is because our joy will not be found in anything in this world but in Him alone. We will rejoice in fulfilling His purpose for us.

[THEREFORE]

How does our love of this world keep us from willingly suffering for the name of Jesus?

Matthew 6:24 teaches us that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot love the world and serve Jesus. This means we cannot live for this life and think we will willingly suffer for Jesus. 1 John 2:15 reminds us that we cannot love the things of this world. Instead, we must cast off this world in order to faithfully proclaim the Gospel.

What does it look like for you to suffer for the sake of Jesus daily?

To follow Christ and to suffer for Him means to take up our cross daily. Galatians 2:20, Luke 9:23, and 2 Corinthians 5:17 tell us to die to ourselves and take up our cross daily. To do this, we must put our earthly desires on our cross daily and take that up. When we do this, we will suffer for Jesus.

3. Acts 16:25: Paul and Silas were willing to suffer for Jesus. They sang praises to Him and worshiped Him though they had been beaten for His sake.