

Acts 12

God Resists the Proud

Scripture: Acts 12

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 5:5b *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

Lesson Focus: This chapter contrasts the pride and arrogance of Herod with the humble dependence of the early church on God. As our memory verse declares, we hope the kids will be encouraged to not only resist being proud, but pursue humble dependence on the God who loves them!

Activities and Crafts: Peter Set Free Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st/2nd Grade: Pop-up Jail

Starter Activity: One-up “Bragging” Game

Consider getting the lesson going by having the kids “one-up” each other. After throwing out a simple starter statement invite the kids to respond by out-doing or “one-upping” you and each other. One example would be to say “I have one pet”. Have all of the kids with only one pet stand up. Then “one-up” those kids standing by asking kids to stand up who have two pets (and have the kids with one pet sit down). Then three, then four, etc. See below for a few more examples:

- 1) How many times have you moved cities?
- 2) How old is your oldest living relative?
- 3) How many brothers/sisters do you have?
- 4) How many Star Wars movies have you seen?

Teachers: Play a few rounds and make it fun! The point of this is to get kids bragging just a LITTLE bit so be sure to select softer topics that are less likely to make kids feel bad if they get “one-up’d”. (For example: It’s probably not a big deal to get one-up’d on how many siblings you have vs. getting one-up’d on the number of toys you have!). Afterwards, have some discussion to transition into the lesson.

Q: In playing this game, what is it that we end up doing? A: BRAGGING!

Q: And who are we bragging about? A: OURSELVES! *

Q: It is way too easy to BRAG about OURSELVES. Why do you think that is? *

We all know it is no fun to be around proud people that think they are better than everyone else. But in our lesson today, we are going to discover what God thinks about the proud person. Let’s take a look!

Bible Study:

Acts 12:1a: At about what time? * The last several weeks we have seen the good news of Jesus's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins continue to spread like wildfire. The last chapter ended with Barnabas and Saul coming back to the land of Israel with aid from the non-Jewish Christians in Antioch. *

Acts 12:1b: But as we have seen before in Acts, as the church makes great progress, the enemy responds with great persecution. King Herod is now the enemy leading this new wave of persecution. And as we will see, he was a proud and pompous man. *

Acts 12:2: Oh no! This is one of the key leaders of the church that was killed! Peter, James, and John were the three who were closest to Jesus! This is a huge blow to the early church. *

Acts 12:3: And here we see why Herod was doing this: to please the crowd. Being a proud man, he also wanted to be popular.

Q: What does it mean to be popular? A: To be admired and liked by many people. Being popular isn't necessarily a bad thing as people might be popular simply because they are kind, friendly, and fun to be around. But people who are proud seek to be popular for their own glory. And Herod captures Peter to gain such popularity among the Jews. *

Acts 12:4: This is now the third time we have seen Peter get arrested in the book of Acts! Poor guy! * Knowing that the Jewish people were preoccupied with the Passover celebration, Herod wanted to wait until after it was over to show off his prized captive. I suspect he thought he would get more attention and gain more popularity that way!

Q: Now what is the opposite of being proud? Being humble! The proud person is self-centered. The humble person is God-centered! * (**Teachers:** Consider writing the memory verse on the whiteboard and referring to it here and throughout the lesson to contrast Herod's proud posture with the humble posture of the early church)

Acts 12:5: Notice how humble and God-centered the church was after they learned about Peter's imprisonment!

Q: What did they do? A: They unleashed their secret weapon: PRAYER! Christians pray because they recognize they need God's help! *

The proud person says: "I've got this." The humble person says: "God's got this."

Acts 12:6-7: Wow! And look what God does in response!

Q: Who did God send to rescue Peter? A: An angel! God's got this, indeed!

Acts 12:8-10: As we have seen many times before, the book of Acts is filled with ACTION! Imagine what this looked like! There were many soldiers watching over him and Peter was even chained to two of them. Yet somehow, miraculously, he escaped!

Teachers: Consider re-reading and acting this scene out. We will leave two sets of handcuffs in your room. Have Peter chained to two guards initially and have the angel come in and take them off. Don't be afraid to borrow props from the resource room! *

Acts 12:11: Peter at first thought this was just some sort of dream. But now that he looks around and sees that he is not in jail, but standing out in the middle of the city, he figures out that it was all real!

Acts 12:12: And he decides to go to the house of some Christians he knows. *

Q: What were they doing? A: They were still praying!

Acts 12:13-14: The story starts to get a little funny now. Rhoda was so beside herself when she learned that it was Peter that she runs back to tell everyone about it instead of letting him in! *

Acts 12:15: And here it gets even funnier. The people praying didn't believe her! *

Q: What were all of these Christians praying for? A: God's protection over Peter. And God's answer is standing right at the gate! While they prayed so fervently, it appears they didn't consider God capable of answering so soon!

Acts 12:16: Meanwhile, Peter is still standing outside knocking! Remember the guards will be on the lookout for him soon enough! But they, astonished, finally let him in.

(Teachers: Consider re-reading and acting this scene out as well)

Acts 12:17: And Peter tells them to spread the word of his release among the believers. What an encouraging answer to prayer this would be for all of them! * Indeed, **God gives grace to the humble!**

Acts 12:18-19: But as for the proud, let's see what happens to Herod. Furious that Peter escaped he takes out every one of those guards and leaves the area foiled and defeated.

Acts 12:20-21: And next we find Herod exactly where any proud person would want to be: On his throne, in his fancy clothes, at the center of everyone's attention, giving a speech to impress the crowd and increase his fame and popularity.

Acts 12:22: This is quite the response from the crowd!

Q: Were the people impressed with him? * But do you think God was impressed?

Acts 12:23: WHOA! Apparently not! Remember, **God resists the proud.** Why? Because the proud steal the glory that belongs to God alone! * Instead of bowing before the one true and living God, Herod wanted to take God's place and have people bow before him! * And if we are not careful, we do the same when we are proud and arrogant. *

Acts 12:24: At the beginning of this chapter, Herod seemed to be in control and the church was in trouble. But at the end, Herod is dead and the church is very much alive! *

Key Point: In another book of the Bible the same Peter wrote that, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" But notice what he goes onto say right after that: "*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you!*" (1 Peter 5:6-7) *

Did you hear that? This all-powerful and mighty King of Kings **cares** about YOU! He proved it on the cross when He died for your sins. Trust in Him. * Resist being proud and pompous. Resist "one-up-ing" others. Instead, come to Jesus with humble trust. Pray and depend on Him just like these Christians did. And give God the glory when He answers!

FIND THE TREASURE



Read Acts 12:5
 What did the early church do after Peter was captured?

PARENT CHALLENGE
 Why is God opposed to the proud?

Read Proverbs 16:5
 How did this prove true in Acts 12?

