

# PEOPLE ARE LISTENING

By Becky Reeder

## SCRIPTURE

Acts 16:25-26

*Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!*

## OBSERVATION

Paul and Silas were thrown into prison as they ventured forth preaching the gospel. Businessmen of the day feared they were losing money over the words spoken by the Christian missionaries, and they retaliated. Paul and Silas were attacked, taken before the magistrates and falsely accused of causing an uproar. At the order of the court, they were stripped, beaten, bound and imprisoned.

Then they prayed and praised God, and people were listening. God was listening, too. As the earth shook, the prison began to crumble, and the doors flew open; Paul and Silas were freed. But they weren't the only ones. Notice that the chains of *every* prisoner fell off—not just Paul and Silas, but every prisoner.

Most of us never risk imprisonment for our faith, yet our hearts are often bound by chains we didn't choose. Illness, financial hardships, broken relationships and an uncertain future can hold us captive to our circumstances if we do not turn to Christ. Believers are not promised a prison-free life, but when we pray and praise God amid our suffering, we are acknowledging the freedom we have in Christ. Rest assured, people are listening.

## OBEDIENCE

The jailer guarding Paul and Silas and his whole household came to believe in God that night. Our response to hardship can either hinder or give hope to a hurting world. Paul and Silas *chose* to pray and praise God that night. We have a choice, too.

None of us have ever lived through a pandemic like the COVID-19 outbreak. As people's anxieties and fears overcome them, and as our abilities to respond are limited, we can be obedient in prayer and in praise. Though prayer and praise may look different during this time, God is attentive to our prayers (Jeremiah 29:12) and welcomes our praise (Psalm 22:3).

As I navigate a new normal, I am discovering new ways to pray and praise Jesus' name:

- Chances are you have more time than usual. Spend this extra time in prayer and in God's Word.
- Turn the TV down and the worship music up!
- Connect with the church on Facebook during the daily noon prayer time. Ask others to join you.
- Start a prayer journal, praying for specific people and praising God for answered prayers.
- Keep a diary and write down what God is speaking to your heart.
- Use technology to help you meet with others so that you can pray and worship together.
- Find worship music online, or on the radio, and sing together as a family.
- Call and check on friends and family. Spend time talking and praising God for the work He is doing and pray for each other.
- Join an online Bible study group.
- Participate in Sunday morning worship services online.

If you find yourself not knowing how to pray, simply talk to God in everyday language. Spend time with Him by reading His Word and singing songs of praise. Remember, Paul and Silas were not focused on their circumstances but on a holy, loving and eternal God.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Lord, we praise You for Your unending mercy and thank You for allowing us to express our deepest emotions to You. We long for Your power and presence in our lives. We ask for You to deepen our faith as we walk through challenging times and may our testimony of prayer and praise lead others to believe. In Jesus' name, Amen.