

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God’s people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God’s Word**—that we don’t just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You’ll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory “**Launch**” section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following “**Learn & Live**” section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The “**Leave**” section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don’t neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don’t force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

A JAIL BAIL

Peter Escapes Prison
Acts 12
AD 43

BIBLE TRUTH

God preserves us to serve Him.

LEARNER GOAL

I can express how God works to preserve His people, even in the midst of persecution and great difficulty.

BIBLE VERSE

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. James 1:2

LAW & GOSPEL

In this world of sin, I and the whole Church of God will be persecuted on account of Christ. **God works through His Word to break the chains of sin, relieve the suffering it causes, and sustain me and the rest of His Church.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

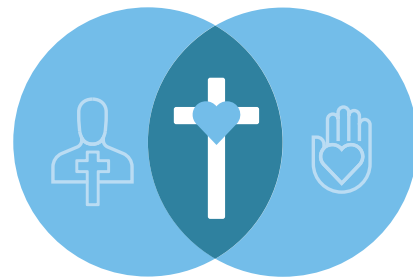
King Herod launches attacks on the Church, killing James, the brother of John. When Herod sees how much this pleases the Jews, he has Peter imprisoned. Peter is guarded by four squads of soldiers as the Church prays for him. That night, an angel appears and leads Peter past the guards and out of the prison. Peter knocks at the gate of the house where the others are gathered in prayer. A servant girl, Rhoda, answers. She is so excited that she runs to tell the others, leaving Peter to continue knocking. An angel of the Lord strikes Herod down for his pride.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read the Seventh Petition in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)*.

IN DEPTH Read "Persecuted for the Faith" in *TLSB* (p. 2048).



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God sets me free from sin and death through His Son.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can trust God to free me so that I can share His message with others.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can express how God works to preserve His people, even in the midst of persecution and great difficulty.

YOUTH

I can share how God cares for me and leads me to serve Him.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God keeps us safe and helps us to serve Him.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God hears my prayers and helps me in my troubles.



LEADER NOTE

Almost everyone, at some point in their lives, feels like God is distant from them. This does not require a crisis of faith, just a feeling that God is not as evident in everyday life as possible. Encourage your learners to share an experience like this, then share what they learned. Some learners will likely believe that God caused some evil in their life to grow their faith. If this is the case, steer them to think about how God does not desire evil for His people, but that He can and does salvage evil things in our lives for His good. Then lead your learners to look at the text to see how God preserved His Church, despite great trials, to serve Him.



BONUS ACTIVITY

In these difficult times of persecution, God's people prayed. If you have time, review the Second Commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017), and consider together what it means to call upon God in every trial.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

Consider a time in your life when God felt far away. Looking back on that now, what did you learn from the experience?

LEARN & LIVE

ACTS 12:1–5

BIBLE COMMENTARY

This section begins with a regime change in Roman-occupied Judea. The grandson of Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa I, takes control, the first king since Herod the Great to have that much political power in the region. In his desire to gain the support of the Jewish population, he clamps down on the burgeoning Christian population. He kills James the brother of John, and he arrests Peter with a similar intent. It is unclear as to why James is taken first and then Peter a bit later, but one interpretation is that the disciples at the time are all out doing missionary work in the area, leaving only a few behind. The arrest of Peter during the days of Unleavened Bread, or the festival after the Passover meal, possibly indicates that Peter had journeyed back to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Regardless, Peter is arrested with the intent of capital punishment. The similarities of this persecution to the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus are striking. Peter, like James, is willing to follow Jesus even unto death. The whole Church goes to the Lord in prayer during these uncertain times.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you suppose life would have been like for the Church during these events? In what ways does this compare to persecution in the Church today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers will vary, but due to the Church's prayers for Peter, things definitely felt uncertain. People were likely fearful of death and persecution. The Church today experiences persecution in different forms, but many around the world face the constant threat of martyrdom.

ACTS 12:6–11

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Here, on the eve of the anniversary of Jesus' crucifixion, God preserves Peter's life. Though Peter is guarded by four men, stripped and shackled, and behind multiple locked doors and gates, an angel approaches him and delivers him from danger. The scene is so unbelievable that, until Peter is left alone on the street, Peter believes it to be a vision. God never promises to keep us from all harm and danger. Indeed, the apostle James was martyred for his faith. God does, however, remain faithful to His promises to forgive His people their sins and lead them from the prison of sin and death to the new creation.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What are some details from this section that reveal the magnitude of this miracle? Why do you suppose these details were added, and what do they mean?

REFLECTION HELPS

Peter was heavily guarded and shackled, and the angel led him through unnoticed and untouched. Peter didn't even believe at first. This not only shows Peter's humanity, but also the extent to which God went to preserve His Church.

ACTS 12:12–19

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Now the scene shifts away from the miraculous to the seemingly mundane. As a fugitive on the run, Peter goes to a familiar place: the house of Mary the mother of the future Gospel writer John Mark. In this place, many of the believers are gathered in prayer for Peter. Some traditions say that this upper room was the site of the Last Supper many years prior. Regardless, Peter must be familiar enough to the household that Rhoda, a servant, immediately recognizes his voice when he knocks on the door. In her surprise and amazement, she runs and tells the others that it is Peter, all the while forgetting to unlock the door! The others do not believe her, a humorous detail considering they were just praying for Peter's release. It is unclear what they mean by the comment "It is his angel," but perhaps some believe that a guardian angel of some kind is sending a message to them from Peter. Before we are too hard on them, however, we must remember the surprise and confusion of the event. Resolute, Rhoda does not waver in her conviction. She leads the group to the door, and they indeed find Peter, who recounts the events of his escape. Peter then goes away, likely leaving the city as he is now a fugitive on the run from Herod Agrippa. Meanwhile, when the tyrant-king learns of the escape, he executes the guards. He will eventually pay for his cruelty with his very life.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Why do you suppose Luke went into such great detail to describe this section, and what effect do you think it is supposed to have on us? What can we learn about life in the Church from this?

REFLECTION HELPS

Luke not only chronicled the somewhat humorous human side of God's work in Rhoda, he also desired to show how God reverses expectations. Today we can find comfort in knowing that the Early Church, too, was filled with confusing times, and even so, that God remained faithful.

ACTS 12:20–25

BIBLE COMMENTARY

As a kind of final sidenote to the matter, we catch a glimpse of the poetic end of Herod. At a lavish party, Herod, the onetime self-declared defender of the Jewish faith, accepts praise worthy of God alone, and God's angel strikes him down. In the midst of this, the Word of God continues to spread and to work, and more come to faith in Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTION

In your opinion, does Herod's death have a kind of poetic justice based on what we have learned of him here? What does this show us about how God works?

REFLECTION HELPS

Previously, Herod had persecuted Christians on the platform of championing the Jewish faith, yet here God strikes him down for accepting the praise due God alone. In the end, we trust that God is in control of all things and will not abandon His people.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

In your own words, express how God works to preserve His people, even in the midst of persecution and great difficulty.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

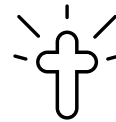
CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

For an extender to the lesson, either in class or for your learners at home, consider taking another look at the parable of the sower in **Luke 8:4–15**. In this parable, Jesus reveals different ways the Word of God is received as His people spread the Gospel. Challenge your learners to connect the parable and today's narrative, thinking about how God's Word works in the midst of trials. Then challenge your learners to consider how God uses them to spread His Word to different areas of their lives.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ frees us from the prison of sin and death and leads us to eternal life.



LEADER NOTE

God's angels are with us, and His Word is active to do what God plans. Even when we suffer great evils, God's promises in Christ remain true and He preserves us from eternal death in Jesus.

