



**Educate
+ Engage**



TRUE
WORSHIPERS:



The Sound
of Freedom

OVERVIEW

Today we focus on the chain-breaking, prison-door-opening power of worship. Paul and Silas worshipped while in jail, but they weren't the only ones set free. Praise opened the prison doors for everyone who was bound. Worship is often a demonstrative act, especially when our freedom depends on it.

Scripture Passage

Acts 16:23–26 (KJV)

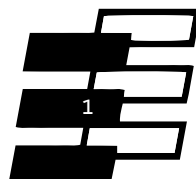
And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

EDUCATE

The Sound of Freedom

If your goal is to live in a quiet little town, then never move to Cherry Point, North Carolina. There's an old story of a man who moved his family to Cherry Point to start a new career. When he got there, he started noticing the abrupt, concerning sounds of guns firing, bombs exploding, and V-22 Osprey aircraft taking off into the bright blue skies. He was at the grocery store that day, so he asked the cashier, "What's going on? Are we under attack?" She scanned his purchase of Hot Pockets and Coca-Colas and then proceeded to laugh. "Sir, you must be new to Cherry Point. The Marine Corps Air Station is just a few miles from here. You'll hear sounds like these just about every day in this town."

Understandably, the man grew angry. He couldn't believe that he had relocated his wife and children to such a noisy, chaotic town. It was inconvenient. Security drills were a weekly occurrence. He even had to take different routes to work based on what the airbase was doing.



Lesson 1

One day he had enough and decided to go to the Air Station to tell them they were making a mess of his town. He had it all planned out in his mind down to the last insult. When he pulled up, his anger melted into guilt as he read the famous sign, "PARDON THE NOISE: IT'S THE SOUND OF FREEDOM." He and his family still went inside, not to file a complaint, but to thank those defending our great country so we can enjoy freedom. Freedom requires a sound.

Worshippers Make a Sound Because Their Freedom Depends on It

John 4:23 (NKJV)

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

Paul and Silas are textbook examples of worshippers. They had been severely beaten and thrown into prison for casting out demons in the name of Jesus Christ. Their freedom had been taken away from them, but they knew they served a God who could deliver them. They were in the innermost prison cell, but true worshippers don't worship based on their surroundings or their situations; true worshippers worship in spirit and in truth. Even though Paul and Silas had been locked in that prison cell, their worship in spirit and truth couldn't be locked out.

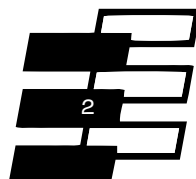
Paul and Silas had the spirit to worship and held fast to truth even in the middle of their prison cell. While many would have stopped praising God because of the atmosphere, late in the midnight hour Paul and Silas began to worship the Lord in prayer and in songs: "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25, NKJV).

Paul and Silas started worshipping the Lord even with chains wrapped around their feet. The sound of worship doesn't require a ten-piece worship band on a Sunday morning; the sound of freedom just requires our voice. Psalm 150 talks about praising God on instruments, but then concludes with this: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 150:6, NKJV).

Psalms 34:1 (NKJV)

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Discussion Questions: When is the most difficult time you praised God? How did your praise and worship help you see God in difficult times?



Lesson 1

Worshippers Change the Atmosphere for People around Them

When Paul and Silas opened their mouths and made a sound to praise God, the atmosphere completely changed. Things started shaking when Apostolics started praising God in the atmosphere of that prison.

Acts 16:26 (NKJV), emphasis added

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately **all** the doors were opened and **everyone's** chains were loosed.

Notice what happens when true worshippers begin to make a sound. The Bible says that *all* the doors were opened, and *everyone's* chains were loosed. Paul and Silas so impacted the atmosphere that every door opened. When you worship, chains start breaking in your city. Chains start breaking off your family. Prison doors swing open and captives are set free when you sing. When you shout, God fells walls. There's a shaking that's coming, but that shaking is always preceded by a sound. When that sound goes up, freedom starts coming down from Heaven.

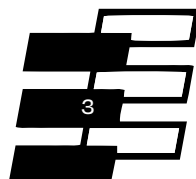
Discussion Question: How would you have responded if you were in a cell next to Paul and Silas?

Worshippers Refuse to Be Secretive about Their Freedom

After Paul and Silas were set free, the prison guard tried to end his own life. Paul cried out to him and told him not to harm himself. That night he baptized the guard (and his family) in the name of Jesus Christ. He didn't use his freedom to escape quietly; rather, he used his freedom to help set someone else free.

The magistrates knew Paul could not be contained, so they sent officers to ask Paul if he would leave quietly without anyone knowing about it. They may have wanted him to be secretive about what happened so word wouldn't spread that God had opened the prison doors. But true worshippers refuse to be secretive about what God has done, and Paul refused to depart secretly.

Acts 16:37 (NKJV)



Lesson 1

But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."

Discussion Question: Why would you want to hide something as powerful as freedom?

Closing

Don't allow the enemy to make a deal with you and convince you to be quiet about what God has done. There are prison guards and prisoners who need you to be bold in your worship. Maybe this is your first time coming to a church where sounds are part of worship. Worship can be loud. It can be inconvenient. It can mess up schedules, plans, and agendas. But freedom calls for a sound. "Pardon the noise; it's the sound of freedom."

John 8:36

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

ENGAGE

Like Paul and Silas, Jesus has called you to be atmosphere changers. Worshiping in the middle of adversity is one of the most Apostolic attributes you can possess. Worshiping God when you aren't feeling like it is not hypocrisy; it's faith. Don't be secretive about your freedom. Others need what you have.

Discussion Question: How will you covenant to worship God no matter what you're going through?

