

WELCOME**Our Mission is to . . .**

- Connect you to Jesus
- Connect you to His community for discipleship
- Connect you to your mission and purpose in life

We are not here to tell you what to wear, eat, listen to, vote for, or even believe. These are things you must determine for yourself if you want to have real faith. We are here to give you truth, facts, tools and point out that every choice, every belief, and every action you make is tied to an outcome in your life. You can't do life without developing a strong foundation and becoming a person of substance. This is your journey, your discovery, and you will reap the benefit of the work you do.

FHNew - Our mission as a church is to do everything we can to help you grow your faith. If you would like to get to know us a little better or begin or continue your journey of faith, text **FHNew** to **53123** and we will send you a link to a few short videos about Foothills Church, or stop by the **Connection booth in the Atrium.**

You can also fill out a **Connect card** using the QR code on the screen or the actual card on the back of the chair in front of you. If you have a **PRAYER REQUEST**, this is a good place to write it out and place in the ORANGE offering box in the back of the Sanctuary.

FHBaptism - One important step in your faith journey is being baptized. To learn more about baptism, text **FHBaptism** to **53123** and we will send you the teaching on Believers' Baptism.

ONGOING/UPCOMING

- [Moms groups](#) (links)
- [Bible Recap](#) – read through the Bible

INTRODUCTION

We are in a series over the summer called **Snapshots of Scripture** where we look at great stories of the Bible. Today we turn to the New Testament and the story of Peter's imprisonment.

Before I read the story, I'd like to point out some of the areas in your life where this story can be of tremendous benefit to you.

MAIN POINT: In every Christian's life, there will be a time when you find yourself in a snare or trap. It happens to everyone throughout their journey of faith and sometimes multiple times!

Sometimes it's a snare of our own making. We are all flawed people, we make mistakes, we have blind spots.

Sometimes it's habitual sins, character flaws, etc. Often when this happens, we experience a lot of guilt or shame, which is another snare.

Sometimes it's somebody else's snare. We live in a broken world with believers and non-believers. Therefore, things are constantly getting messed up and we get caught up in it.

- I have a good friend who graduated from Columbia University in the late 70s with a degree in economics. He joined a large corporation. One of the higher-ups took a liking to him, and he started rocking to the top. Unfortunately, the one mentoring him had a falling out with someone in the office of the president of the company. That person maneuvered and got his mentor fired, and because he was being mentored by him, he was terminated as well. He became "persona non grata" in that community in New York City where all the action was happening. Consequently, he had to completely redirect his career.
- Chloe Dygart fell in the rain and still took the bronze medal in time trials.

Sometimes it's a snare completely set by the devil because it is a part of the cosmic battle happening in the spiritual realm.

- **Ephesians 6:12** *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.*
- **1 Timothy 4:1** *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,*

If you have ever been in a snare, feel like you're about to be in a snare or have come out of a snare, this story can give you encouragement and direction.

Acts 12:1-19 (NASB)

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. 2 And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well. (Now these were the days of Unleavened Bread.)

- Herod is playing a game. The Romans rule the empire. They appoint kings or tetrarchs over each region of their empire. These are people with claims to royalty in the region

- In Israel, Herod is the “King of the Jews.” This was a title given to his father, Herod the Great, by the Roman senate in 39BC
- Herod does not govern the people; he allows the Sanhedrin to do this. They govern the daily life of the Jewish people

4 When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, turning him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending only after the Passover to bring him before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made to God intensely by the church.

6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near Peter, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, “Put on your belt and strap on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” 9 And he went out and continued to follow, and yet he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 Now when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

- Luke is painting a very important picture here. It’s interesting that Luke recorded the number of guards: 4 squads. A squad was called a “contubernia” which means “tenting together” in Latin -- it consisted of 10 soldiers
- There was no way out
- Peter is in a guarded prison, he has four squads of soldiers assigned to watch over him, he is in chains, sleeping between two soldiers with two other soldiers guarding the door to his cell
- There is a king, joining together with the Sanhedrin, who is adamantly opposed to Peter. Earlier in the Book of Acts, we learn that he had previously arrested Peter and had him beaten publicly
- Sidenote: Snares always feel completely hopeless
 - If you’re single and you feel caught in the wilderness, wondering if you will ever meet someone and fall in love, this time may feel absolutely hopeless
 - If your marriage is caught in a snare, it can seem pretty hopeless
 - If your child is caught in a snare and you are at your wits end, it can seem pretty hopeless
 - If you are caught in an addiction, it can seem pretty hopeless

12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a slave woman named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. 15 They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, “It is his angel.” 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed. 17 But motioning to them with his

hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brothers." Then he left and went to another place.

18 Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. 19 When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

TAKE AWAYS: When you are caught in a snare it always seems hopeless

- We never know what the outcome might be: The apostle James was arrested by Herod and immediately put to death by the sword. That would have sent shockwaves through the church . . . then Peter gets arrested
- There were likely people in the church thinking: This is bad, really bad. Same thing is going to happen to Peter. The church is praying fervently but there were likely those in the church who were thinking: This is the end for Peter . . . What do we do next?
- This is one of the hardest truths of being a follower of Jesus: You forfeit the control of your life . . . even to the point of whether you live or die. This is a difficult truth to understand, but it's a most empowering, freeing, inspiring, even hopeful truth that you can adopt into your heart
 - This truth gives you freedom
 - This truth gives you the capacity to persevere and endure anything you face in life -- It is the victory that overcomes the world, it is the power of faith
 - It is the only truth that allows the suffering in life to strengthen your meaning and purpose, not destroy it

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the snares you have found yourself in throughout your lifetime?
2. How hopeless did they seem at the time?
3. How did God bring you through them, and what did you learn about His faithfulness?