

date: **7/16/17****Bible Passage: Acts 11:19–30**
(Paul in Antioch)

God Wants Everyone to Know Him

REMEMBER VERSE

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”
John 14:6–7

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

I stood before hundreds of African children—abandoned orphans—in a dusty alley behind an empty building. Their eyes were glued to me. Their faces were filled with wonder as I told them the biblical creation story.

As I shared this part of God’s story, I paused and asked: “Have any of you ever heard of Adam and Eve?” Then ... blank stares. I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone (child or adult) who’s never heard of Adam and Eve. “Does anybody here know who Jesus is?” I asked. More blank stares. One child in the back sheepishly raised his hand. I was stunned! Right then I knew God would do something big.

For a week after, I poured my heart out to the kids. I told them about The Big God Story. I taught them about prayer. I encouraged them to live and love like Jesus. I explained to them that Jesus is with us in suffering. Every day more and more children came; the kids were inviting their friends! At the end of that week, I offered an opportunity for them to pray to accept Christ into their lives. I asked them to raise their hand if their hearts felt different after hearing about God. Several hundred tiny hands reached into the air! Amazing!

That week, the Holy Spirit was among us. I am amazed at how God, through His Spirit, made Himself known to these kids who had never heard of Him before. I’m also amazed God allows me to know Him and to share the story of His love with others.

Erika Abdelatif
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Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

In Acts 11, the disciples were called Christians for the first time. The word *Christian* meant “little Christ.” The title was given to them by outsiders to identify or perhaps mock them. Even so, the early Christians felt the name was fitting, and they adopted it as their own.

Before this, early believers identified themselves as “The Way” and adopted the symbol of the fish as an identifying symbol. The image of a fish was an excellent way to distinguish fellow Christians from persecutors. Christianity has many connections to fish or fishing. For instance, Jesus used two fish to feed five thousand people, and He called His apostles to be fishers of men.

You might know that upon meeting another person on a path, an early Christian would draw an arc in the sand with his toe. If the other person completed the image of a fish by drawing a second arc, both were assured of their brotherhood. This gave them a sense of safety and camaraderie in the midst of great persecution. Early Christians also wrote the word *ichthus*. In Greek, *ichthus* means “fish.” The word *ichthus* formed an acrostic (a word composed of the first letter of several other words) that stood for “Jesus Christ,” “God’s Son,” “Savior.”

Even today, the *ichthus* is an icon for the modern church, though now more commonly known as the Jesus Fish. It’s still widely used to identify fellow brothers and sisters—the little Christs who still desire to spread the good news that God wants everyone to know Him.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

Take a moment to read Acts 11:19–30. What does this passage tell you about God? What does it say about His character? His love and care for people?

In this lesson, children will have the opportunity to ask how God can use them to show others His love. They will be encouraged to pray for people around the world, to serve their neighbors, and to know God for themselves so that their light will shine brightly.

Before sharing this lesson with the kids, ask God to fill you with His presence. Ask Him to show you something true about Himself that you hadn’t known or hadn’t experienced before. Ask God to give you the desire to know Him more and more. Ask Him to show you how He desires for you to pray for your kids, and then respond to what He says.

SMALL GROUP
SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity



about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Sculptures (for younger kids)

God wants us to know Him! Lead children through an activity of getting to know other children in the group.

SUPPLIES

- Play dough (1 lump for every 2 children)

RELATE

Pair children up. Give each pair a lump of play dough. Have children ask one another questions about things such as their families and what they like to do for fun. Children can use the play dough to sculpt items based on the answers they receive from their partners. After a few minutes, have children switch who shares and who sculpts the answers.

Firsts (for older kids)

Lead children through an EXPLORE in which they discover “firsts” in their friends’ lives.

SUPPLIES

- [First Questions template](#) (see Resources)
- Pencils or pens

PREPARE AHEAD

Print a copy of the First Questions template for each child.

RELATE

Invite each child to take a First Questions template and a pencil or pen. Encourage them to mingle and ask one another the questions. Have each child ask and answer only two questions of each person. This way the kids will get to interact with as many others as possible—especially others they don’t know.

The church in Antioch was one of the first churches outside of Jerusalem. At Antioch many Gentiles (people who weren’t born Jewish) began to believe in Jesus. How amazing to look back to the first days when our brothers and sisters first formed communities as followers of Jesus!

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God’s Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse



SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:6–7

Connect

Question

What is your most favorite toy and why?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Acts 11:19–30

Storytelling Technique: Images and Writing Descriptions

God Wants Everyone to Know Him

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image (see Resources)
- Images: Ancient World Map (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Whiteboard
- Dry erase marker

PREPARE AHEAD

Gather digital photos of your church's community service efforts.

RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **A couple of weeks ago we heard about a man named Saul. What can you tell me about him?** Invite responses. **Great thoughts. Saul, later known as Paul, started out arresting believers in Jesus and bringing them back to Jerusalem. Believers felt in danger in Jerusalem, so many of them moved to nearby cities where they kept telling people about Jesus.**



That's how one of the first churches outside of Jerusalem got started—in the city of Antioch. Invite children to open their Bibles to Acts 11:20 and follow along. **The Bible says that those who went to Antioch “began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20–21). Greeks were Gentiles, or people not born Jewish.**

Antioch was an important city. *Tech: Cue Ancient World Map image.* **It was located on a main river near the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, so it was an important center of trade and business. It was also one of the biggest cities in the ancient world. Because so many people from different nations lived in Antioch, it was the perfect place for God to spread the good news of His love to lots of people!**

Because so many believers were spreading the good news, outsiders gave them a name to set them apart: Christians. This means “little Christs” and describes people who believe in and follow Jesus Christ. **Because there was such an excited, growing community of Christians in Antioch, the church in Jerusalem sent someone to help them. They sent a man named Barnabas.**

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he was really excited! He saw large numbers of new believers—Jewish *and* Gentile. He saw their joy, their friendship, and their faith. Invite children to follow along in verse 23. **The Bible says that when Barnabas arrived, he “saw what the grace of God had done [and] he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (v. 23). Barnabas decided to get Paul to help him.** Point out location of Tarsus on Ancient World Map image. **Barnabas walked northwest, all the way to Paul’s house in Tarsus to ask Paul to help him. Paul said yes and went back to Antioch with Barnabas. They stayed with the new church for a year, teaching, spreading the good news, and serving the new church.**

One day, a famine happened in Jerusalem. Remember, a famine is a time with very little food. The Bible says, “The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters ... sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and [Paul]” (vv. 29–30). By doing this, the church in Antioch showed their concern for their fellow Christians. The Antioch Christians gave them food, clothing, and other things they needed. What are some things our church does to serve those in need? Invite responses. Have any of you taken part in these things? What was that like? Pause for responses.

The Antioch church didn’t stop there. They wanted more and more people to know about Jesus, so they sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journeys to tell the good news to *everyone* who would listen. We’ll learn more about that in the weeks to come.

God wants everyone to know Him. In this part of The Big God Story, the new believers who went to Antioch started one of the first churches outside Jerusalem, spread the good news of Jesus, preached to Gentiles, and helped other believers. The people in the Antioch church were joyful and full of faith.

How else can we describe the Christians in Antioch? What other words might we use? Invite responses, and write the responses on the whiteboard. Great thoughts, everyone! They were hospitable, generous, full of faith, loving, and different, and they wanted people to know about God. What one word sums up all of these descriptions? Invite responses. That’s right: love!

The Bible says, “Everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). The first disciples were so loving and different that people created a name for them: Christians. They were different because they were filled with God’s Holy Spirit.



God wants to lead us, as the church, to be His hands and feet in the world. He wants to work through us to serve others. He wants to fill us with His Holy Spirit so that other people will notice and desire to have what we have. God wants all people to know Him. And He wants to use you to show His love to the world. Share a personal story of a time you shared Jesus with someone who didn't know Him.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Wants Everyone to Know Him

Encourage kids to look up the following verses in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **Why did people call the first believers Christians?** Acts 11:26
- **How did the first Christians love others?** Acts 11:29–30
- **How can we love others?** Philippians 2:5–11
- **How did the first Christians love others who weren't Christians?** Acts 11:20–21
- **How do you think God might use you to show others His love?**

Questions for Older Kids

- **Why did people call the first believers Christians?** Acts 11:26
- **Why did many believers leave Jerusalem?** Acts 11:19
- **What were some of the “firsts” that happened at Antioch?** Acts 11:26
- **How did the Christians in Antioch act toward other Christians?** Acts 11:27–30
- **How did the first Christians love others who weren't Christians?** Acts 11:20–21
- **Why does God want everyone to know Him?** 2 Peter 3:9
- **How do you think God might use you to show others His love?**

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Philippians 1:9–11:

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more ... so that you may be able to [know] what is best and may be pure ... filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

May you know that God is love. May God’s Spirit use you to show His love to others around you.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.

